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# ARCTIC LIGHTS

*By the Same Author*

**DEATH OF A COMMON MAN**

**FEUDAL ISLAND**

**ESCAPE TO THE TROPICS**

**WITCH IN THE WILDERNESS**

# ARCTIC LIGHTS

BY DESMOND HOLDRIDGE

ILLUSTRATED BY EDWARD SHENTON



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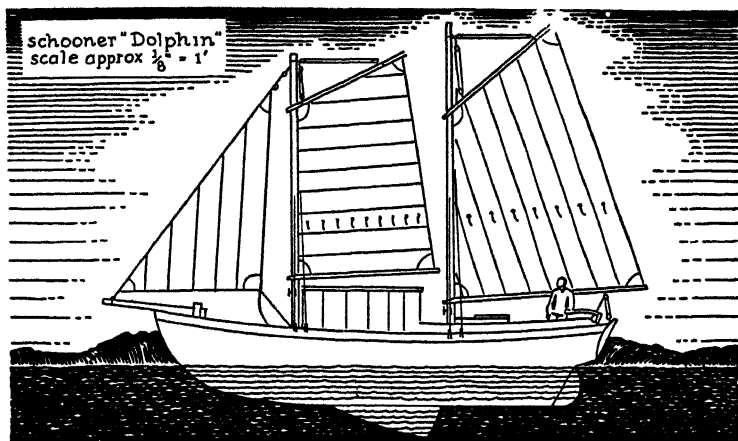
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# ARCTIC LIGHTS





## THE NATURE OF THE VESSEL AND THE VOYAGE

OF THE events in this book I have written before; briefly but in excruciating detail. If the foresail was jibed at midnight, I set down that fact. If I saw a dog on an uninhabited island, I said so. If the tide was against us in an unimportant passage, nothing would prevent my recording the misfortune. But I said nothing of mistakes in navigation, I made no mention of friction among the three very diverse personalities aboard, and never, absolutely never, did I say that we had, at any time, been seasick or at loss for an expedient. It is hardly necessary to say that I omitted all mention of my extreme youth.

The account was published in an obscure but excellent yachting magazine, now defunct; I have often wondered if the laborious detail of my story did not have much to do with the sudden demise of that publication, for otherwise it was a very good one.

But I was intent on sounding like the old sea dogs I admired and very sincerely I was fascinated with the technique of sailing and navigating; so complete was this fascination that I had only a perfunctory interest in the places I visited with my first boat. To the people who inhabited them I paid little heed; that is, when people did inhabit them—often there were harsh, inhospitable spots where even a seal or a bear might consider well before taking up residence. As time went on, however, there were other voyages, other vessels, and other lands and peoples; when I remembered this first cruise the images that came to mind were not those which would be entered in a well-kept logbook. They were thoughts I enjoyed letting come and go at odd moments and they had not much to do with the technicalities of sailing. But I devoted little time to them until thirteen years after the cruise had ended.

It was a flat, heavy package from the American Geographical Society which set me to remembering, remembering in detail and, I fear, with a certain nostalgia. This because I no longer possess the physical courage or downright stupidity I then possessed; of a rather astonishing capacity for enduring discomfort very little remains. The package contained No. 22 of the Society's special publications: *Northernmost Labrador, Mapped from the Air*. An accompanying card informed me that it was sent with the compliments of the author, Alexander Forbes.

Forbes, I knew, had been performing a detailed survey of North Labrador, using planes, a big schooner, and a remarkable mapping method developed by Miller, of the American Geographical Society. It was the best kind of exploration in the modern manner and now, in my hands, I held the results. I thumbed through the pages, looking at the splendid air pictures, picking out old anchorages, and seeing how far a certain fiord just south of Hudson Strait really ran into the mountains. And then, reading the text, I discovered that the absurd voyage of my *Dolphin* was described as a "remarkable cruise," that the rags of information with which I had dressed up my account in the little yachting magazine had actually been of value to this serious explorer, and that we had, indeed, been the first white men to enter the fiord. It was very exciting.

That the cruise of the *Dolphin* could possibly have been of use to anyone had never occurred to me. I got out the old account I had written; half a dozen pages and I was smiling at myself. Thirteen years after the event, I was no longer interested in palming myself off as an old sea dog and an expert in all things that concern sailing and navigation. That the *Dolphin's* foresail had been reefed during the morning watch on August 20, 1925, was a fact long forgotten and quite without importance. But I could remember clearly the cold, damp folds of fog, the naked grandeur of the rocks and peaks, the desolate beauty of the fiords, the rosy cheeks of the jolly Eskimo girls, the unreasoning fear of nothing which attacked me in the Button Islands, the milky streamers of the aurora, the wild runs before gathering storms, the smell of drying fish, the unearthly howl of the sled dogs, the kittiwakes



in Mary's Harbor, the mosquitoes in the long passages among the brown islands, the fiery wake we left astern during the dark nights of early autumn—I could remember a whole host of things that made me glad I had once owned and sailed the *Dolphin*, regardless of the fact that in the Perfect State the Commissar or Führer of Water Sports would have confined me in a concentration camp because my ship was not particularly seaworthy, because I was inexperienced, and because the cruise had been woefully underfinanced.

No doubt, a good deal of trouble might have been avoided had such an official got his hands on me, but one of the pleasant features of the still im-Perfect States is that in them a man can make a fool of himself, elaborately, without being seized by politicians and recalled to the deep worn paths of common sense. For boats, even the uglier ones, are among the loveliest creations of man's hands, and though owning them brings a train of debts, hangnails, bruises, bad frights, and all kinds of worries not experienced by those who content themselves with the more practical vices, the relation between a man and his boat is as personal and intimate as the relation between husband and wife.

Neither relation admits of much outside interference. But, just as there are a few members of the human race who like to live their bedroom life in public, so there are a few people who set out for far places in small boats, not from an overmastering urge to see them and to wage war with the sea, but only to have their names in the newspapers. These deserve every bit of the ridicule heaped upon them.

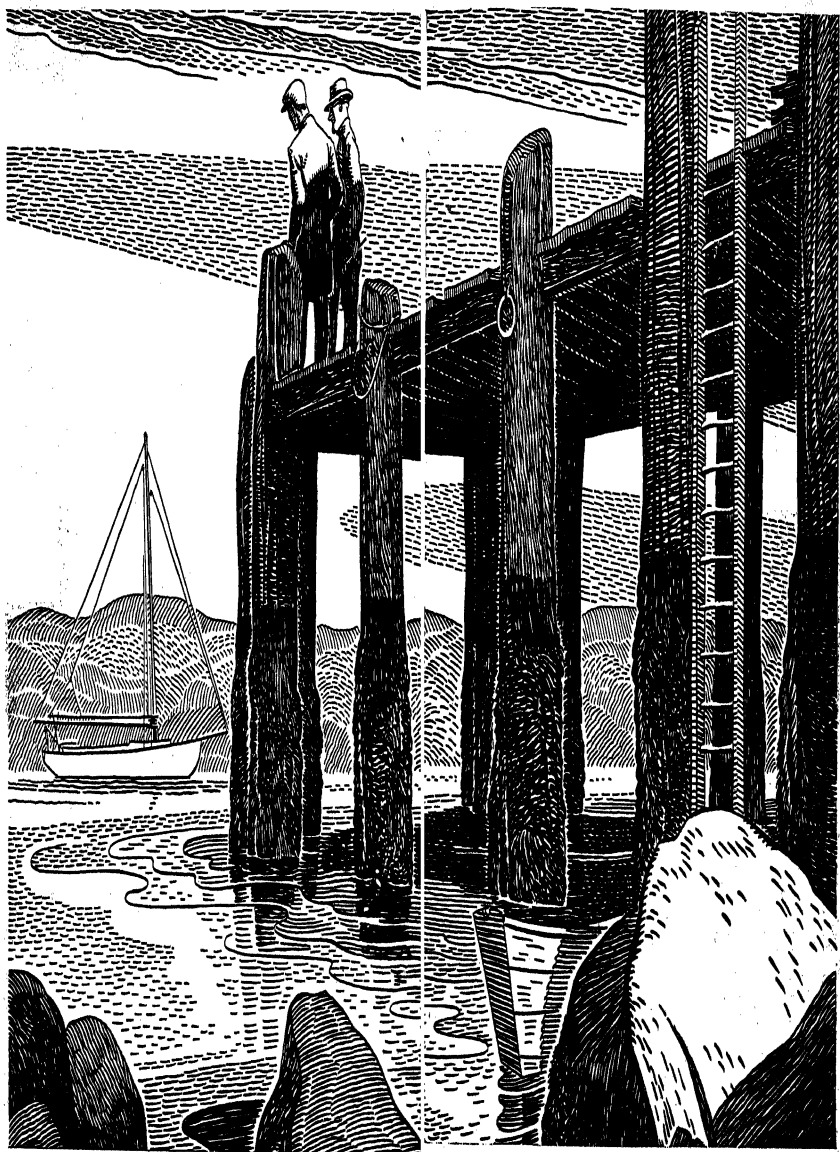
There are, however, others who wish to see strange lands over the bowsprit of their own craft, but, not having enough

money to buy or build the best kind of small yacht, they go forth in an unsuitable vessel simply because they would rather go dangerously than not go at all. Occasionally, those who are more fortunate in the matter of money grow indignant with these men, saying that they should be prevented from embarking on their lunacies, since the Coast Guard or someone else will in all probability have to pluck them off the wrecks to which a righteous sea will reduce their hookers. The argument would be better if the cost and risk to the Coast Guard in so doing, over an average five-year span, were not but a fraction of the cost of a summer of pulling well-designed, well-built, and exceedingly expensive yachts off mudbanks and sand bars, plus the dispatch of an escorting cutter for an ocean race. I am disposed—unfairly, perhaps—to connect this sort of abuse with the fact that yachting is big business as well as splendid sport, and I am touchy about it because my first boat cost four hundred dollars and had previously been used to haul potatoes from Tancook Island to Halifax.

When Reuben Heisler showed her to me I thought for a moment that she was a row-boat. We were perched on the dock before his yard, looking at a little, partly decked green sloop dozing in the back harbor. She was a pretty thing, Tancook-built and typical of the work done in that part of Nova Scotia. But she looked very small; Reuben said that she was thirty feet eight inches long, from the forward side of the outer coat of paint on her stem to the after side of the outer coat of paint on her stern.

I asked how much she would cost, half hoping it would be too much.





"Four hundred dollars," Reuben said firmly, and the price was near the upper limit.

I stared a while longer, knowing that she was little more than half the size of the vessel I needed, but two weeks in Nova Scotia had proved that the ideal ship was not going to be purchased with four hundred dollars.

"She's not rigged for a heavy-weather cruise," I demurred. "She's only an open boat except for the bit of deck fore and aft and the strip along her sides. She's small, too. What's her name?"

"*Iron Duke.*"

"That's not a very good name," I said, but, with the words on my lips, I was telling myself that it could be changed. Four hundred dollars! This sloop could be mine.

Reuben performed a gesture that would have been a shrug had he been a Latin. His face was thin and drawn, which was no wonder, for it was said jealous rivals had burned down his yard over on Tancook Island; the new yard had just been established here in Chester. "Well," he murmured, "we can go out and look; I won't hold you to buying just because you looked."

We got into his dory; it leaked and the thwarts were cracked and it needed painting and he could find only one oar for her. "The boat builder's dory," said Reuben whimsically. "They say a shoemaker never has shoes."

If the *Iron Duke* was short, she was also narrow, for, as we got closer, I found that the beam was a bare eight feet and, if she was narrow, she was also shallow; Reuben said she drew only a touch over three feet of water. But she was good-looking. She had a typical Nova Scotian spoon bow and her

stern was narrow, as local practice dictated; she lacked little of being a double-enders. Now if a boat is short and narrow and shallow, it follows that she is small, but it also follows that she is consistent; and consistency, while of doubtful value in some fields, in naval architecture is a prime virtue.

So, small or not, I liked her (at four hundred dollars), and since there were only three of us going a-voyaging, size, I considered, was not important.

"I could do a lot with her," Reuben said. "Put a little house over the hold and there you'd have your cuddy. Give her a schooner rig instead of the sloop and she'll ride out some right bad weather for you. I could do quite a lot. . . ."

"And to do that—how much?"

"Well. . . ." Reuben scratched his head and took a few measurements, although they were hardly necessary; he knew to an eighth of an inch the distance between any two points on her. "Does seventy-five dollars seem a lot?"

It did, because I was going to do this on a very short shoestring.

"That will re-rig her, build a cabin trunk, fit those bunks, and include a place to cook?" Reuben nodded.

"Then I think I'll do it," I said. "I think I will, only I want that name changed; I don't like *Iron Duke* very much."

"It's a good name. But if you don't like it, you can give her another." By the time Reuben took me to catch the Halifax train, I had acquired my first boat. She was two years old.

I hardly think that the road bed has been improved since that spring afternoon, so probably the C.N.R. leaps and rattles as badly as ever. On this occasion the train outdid itself and I could scarcely think of what I had done. But I could

feel, and the feeling was a warm, pleasant one, tempered by apprehension; I had a boat and I never had had one before. Oddly, I did not worry about what the big, gray sea might do to the little thing; it was on Nielsen's opinion and Robinson's that I pondered. I had gone alone to Chester in order to economize on railroad fare. Now I had bought a boat outright and they had not been given an opportunity to approve, and both of them were seawise, while I had behind me only summer voyagings on freighters.

I hurried from the Halifax station to the hotel and found the pair of them sitting on a bed reading newspapers and smoking cigarettes. "I've bought a boat," I stated bluntly.

Robbie jumped to his feet. "Where is she?" he demanded. His excitement was gratifying.

"Chester. It's the first one they showed me."

Nielsen, however, remained noncommittal and quiet. There was no stampeding sudden feeling into him, for he was a deliberate, melancholy man, a Dane who had done much seafaring—twenty years of it, I believe. "What's she like?" he asked.

I tried to tell him, but it was difficult to describe her, for I had absorbed the integral picture rather than the details, and in the end we all walked down to the waterfront to see if I could find a duplicate to show them. There were steamers down there and schooners, and a fishing ship or two, and ultimately we found a dock with several little green schooners, replicas in all but rig of the *Iron Duke*, as Reuben called her. On one, a man leaned against a canary-yellow mainmast smoking, in a ruminative fashion, a short, black pipe.

"Where was your schooner built, Skipper?" I called from the height of the dock. "Skipper" looked at us in silence and then took his pipe from his mouth. He inspected it with some attention and spat over the side.

"Tancook," he said eventually.

"There," I told Robbie and Niels. "It's the same build as this one I've bought." And returning to "Skipper": "Is she a good boat?"

He spat over the side again. "I guess there's worse some'er's," he replied cautiously. Then he retreated to the cuddy.

To my relief Niels approved. In a stolid way, to be sure, but I knew him well and it was real approval; Robbie was delighted. "She'll do it. She'll do it, and she'll be easier to handle than a big schooner. After all, we're not carrying cargo. All we need is space for ourselves, so the smaller the better."

No cargo. God knows why we were going. We were set on cruising the entire length of the Labrador coast, from the Strait of Belle Isle to Hudson Strait. At first it had been a cruise after seals. We were to fill our ship with sealskins and sell them for about five hundred dollars apiece. When we found out that the kind of seals we meant lived only in the Pacific and that the Labrador seals were another kind whose skins were worth but a few cents, we were not at all disappointed; we merely decided, with the greatest facility, that we would shoot polar bears for their pelts, trade with the Eskimo, and prospect for gold. None of us had ever shot anything but rabbits and partridges; the Hudson's Bay Company and the Moravian Mission stations had the whole Es-



kimo trade on the Labrador nicely in their hands; and as for prospecting, we had not the very faintest knowledge of such a thing.

Nevertheless, the enterprise was on a strictly business-like basis. I bought the boat and outfitted her; Robbie and Niels contributed their persons and services; all profits from hunting, trading, and prospecting were to be split three ways. Not for anything would we have admitted that we were going yachting.

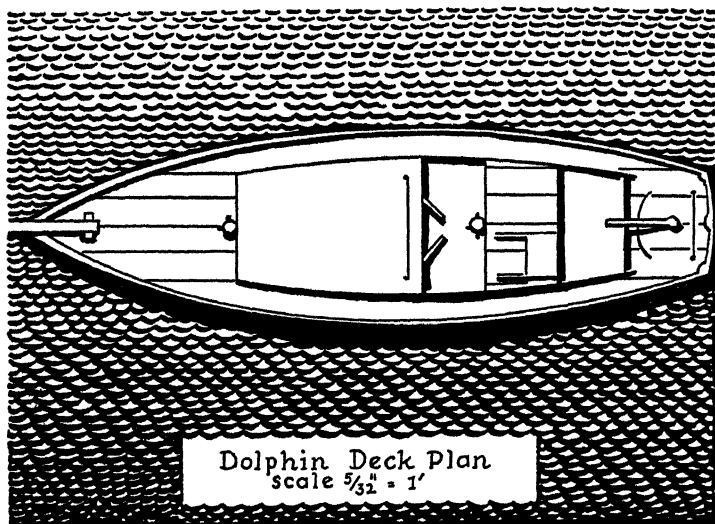
When the three of us moved into Chester to see the work done, it was April and the town was a sea of mud. The big, good homes of summertime American residents were closed and gloomy, there seemed to be no inhabitants, and we stayed at a boarding house where the only other guest was a school teacher, a withdrawn lady who was, I believe, a little afraid of us. In the mornings we always went to the yard and watched Reuben at work. In the afternoon we compiled extensive lists of food supplies, arms, trade goods, charts, navigating equipment, and clothing. Always these had to be destroyed because the money available was not enough. A new list would be made, composed of what we swore were the barest necessities, and then it would be destroyed because it was still too long. We clipped off such things as charts and navigating equipment; a compass and one ancient sheet given us by a retired fishing captain would suffice. Off came every kind of food that could be thought luxurious; in the end we bought cornmeal, salt pork, flour, tea, coffee, sugar, oatmeal, a little tinned milk, dried apricots, and some potatoes. There was lard, too, come to think of it. Even a fundamentalist Spartan would have admitted we were doing ourselves no

favours. Our guns and fishhooks, however, were going to provide for us from what we had hypnotized ourselves into believing was a vast storehouse of meat and fish. As to clothes, we were already well outfitted except that we did not have heavy coats; we decided to scratch along with the light overcoats we wore ashore.

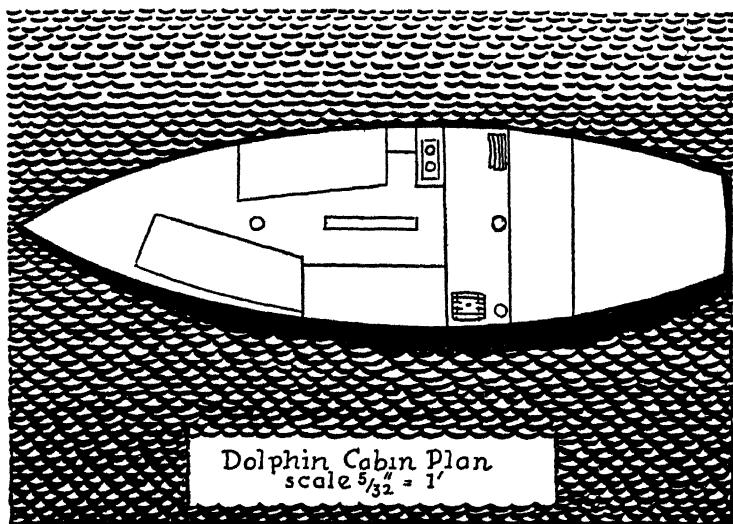
Reuben's shop smelled of new wood. The principal building was new, the steam box was new, the forty-five-foot racing sloop he was building was new and had just been shut in; her planking was being sanded down when we first arrived. Reuben worked frantically; he had to make up all he lost when his island yard was fired and, as well, support himself and his family. But, though he worked fast, he never fumbled and never slighted good craftsmanship for speed. He merely put in more hours per day and his drawn face showed it. One man helped, but since he never spoke and was almost always under the racing sloop, I can say nothing of him.

Reuben brought the sloop alongside his wharf and lifted out her mast. His helper went up into the woods and laid low two tall spruce trees; from them he made a foremast, a gaff, and a boom. The original mast was cut off a little and stepped a trifle abaft the midship point. From the original hatch coamings Reuben built up a high—an over-high—cabin trunk. He put into her some more ballast, iron pigs, and fastened it securely under a strong floor. "It's not nice work," he admitted, "but it's stout and I'm not charging much." All this was true.

Reuben laid out the queerest thing I have ever heard called a cabin plan. Up forward, the whole of her was left empty and dedicated to the stowage of anchor, cable, moor-



ing lines, and such gear. Immediately abaft that sensible arrangement, there was a low platform raised about a foot and a half above the floor. It stretched from port to starboard without interruption and it was six feet long; it was, Reuben explained, a communal bunk. We were to put mattresses on it and sleep there, the three of us, in a heap. Then came the centerboard trunk and, abaft it, to starboard, there was a shelf on which he put a tiny stove. The words *Little Cod* were engraved on its single door. Beneath this there was a place to ~~stow~~ firewood and near by a box was nailed securely as a dish locker. These contrivings we called the galley. On the opposite side there was a place to keep foodstuffs. And then came the after bulkhead of the cabin house; the whole thing was nine feet long, and the headroom, despite the height of the



trunk, which had neither ports nor extra hatches, was only five feet.

This boat is the only sailing craft I ever saw that had two cockpits and I still do not know why this was so. Between the cabin trunk and the forward side of the engine room, there was a deep cockpit with the same floor level as the cabin itself; it was the whole width of the little vessel, the narrow strip of deck on either side protecting it a little, while a single hatch cover \* of the original six remained to close it. Then there was an engine compartment covering a six-horsepower, one-lunged engine of local confection. After that came the second cockpit, where the sheets, in the end, were belayed and steering by the short tiller was performed.

\* This we lost over the side two days after sailing.

Neither of the cockpits was self-bailing, the cabin trunk was of the most ordinary pine, there was nowhere to stow a dinghy, and she was so tender a craft that a man's weight on one side gave her an immediately perceptible heel. We got one coat of yellow paint on the sides of the trunk and never another; inside she remained bare wood until the day she passed out of our hands in a most spectacular fashion. The beauty of her was lost in the ungainly bulk of that high house, the masts seemed too many for so small a boat, and that cabin plan was fiendish.

But she was my first boat and I thought her the finest thing that had ever floated. I thought that with her I could go anywhere in the world. I thought a great many things about her, most of them pure illusion.

We named her *Dolphin* and that, I suppose, because in conceiving this hunting, trading, and prospecting enterprise we had exhausted our powers of invention.

Later, Reuben got prosperous and gained weight and built fine yachts and made his name known widely. His yard got bigger and employed more men, and his sons, little shavers then, now are in the business. But the basic principles of design and construction that went into the humble *Dolphin* have gone into all of them and I know them to be sound. Reuben built and builds in the Tancook manner and on that island the gospel of lightness with strength was preached long before it became a fetish elsewhere. The island lies at the mouth of Mahone Bay and it is exposed to the whole sweep of the gray Atlantic. There is no secure anchorage, and when the winter comes with its ice and violent gales the islanders haul these fishing craft out with the aid of a tackle

and a team of oxen. If they were heavy they would not get them out of the water, for some are as much as fifty feet long. If they were not strong they would be strained and ruined in their bumping journey to the hollows where they are kept.

So they build almost canoe fashion. The frames are flat and close together and the nails are clenched inside. Instead of weight there is careful fitting of faying surfaces. The planking is not heavy, but it is held to the frames with more than the usual number of fastenings. In the end, the whole structure is strong for the same reason a basket is strong: it gives; it bends, but it does not break. And, in addition to this resilience, there is a refinement and temperance of design that does not offend the water; these Tancook craft, considered as abstract shapes, are beautiful and if they were not seaworthy there would be no men on Tancook, for they fish offshore in the autumn and have to beat their way back against rising northwesterners many times in the course of their lives.

It was a shame to put that high house on her. But down below it gave sitting and crouching room and you did not see the ugliness of it.

One day I went around to the yard and Reuben told me that the sailmaker, Randolph Stevens, had brought the new foresail and the recut jib and main. He had left a message saying that we must stop at his house in a cove nine miles away before going on, as there lived there men who had been on the Labrador; we would hear things that neither the charts which we were not taking, nor the sailing directions we did not know existed, could tell us. Also, his wife wanted

to see that we were properly stocked with potatoes and parsnips. We rejoiced and said we would call.

By the middle of May the *Dolphin* was finished, or as finished as she was ever to be, and we took her out for a trial run. The canvas was raised to the lusty wind and she came to life, heeling and sailing, her lee rail awash and taut tunes in her rigging. This was what I wanted. This was what I had hoped for since the day my homemade sailing flattie had careered the length of a fresh-water lake and stabbed her blunt nose up on the beach because she would neither tack nor wear.

We tried bringing the *Dolphin* about and she snapped over satisfactorily, although we had to keep the jib backed until she filled away on the new tack. We jibed her a couple of times. We tried her running, reaching, and beating. To us she seemed fine; only Niels had ever been in sail and that in square-riggers and big Danish schooners trading up to Iceland; compared with a great ark of a four-masted steel bark, the *Dolphin* was a smart sailer. But a little Interclub, to choose a boat of almost the same size, would have sailed her out of sight in half a day.


We anchored her in Chester Harbor instead of the cove before the boat yard. An informal committee of experts said she was saucy and smart and able and handy and many other things, none of which was strictly true. She was all these things, of course, but not in the degree they said. We were given lunch in someone's house, the school teacher breathed a sigh of relief to be rid at last of such odd young men, and a friend of Reuben's saw that we had a chart of Mahone Bay.

"Give it to Randolph Stevens," he instructed. "He lives

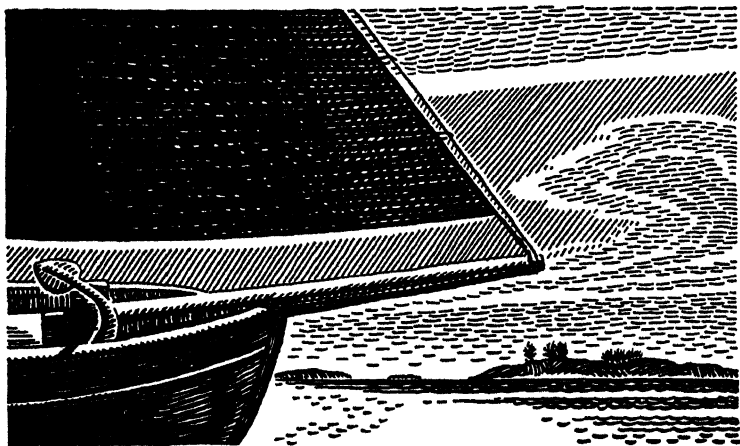
here on this side of Heckman Anchorage. Mind the spit on the north side as you enter. Pay good heed to this island—Oak Island—there is treasure on it, and if there wasn't in the first place, there is now, for three generations have thrown their substance into the shafts they have sunk. And look well at Hobson's Nose, for it was there that an American girl dug up a great chest of gold and bore it off with her within the memory of men now living, Randolph's father, for one. Mind you use good judgment. Mind you do not lose your little schooner thing. God bless you and I hope you'll have good luck."

"Yes," said Reuben. "Good luck."

We jumped from the wharf onto the deck of the *Dolphin*, got canvas on her, cast off, and sailed away. Cabot Strait, Bay of Islands, Labrador, Ungava—all the magic names were close and possible.







## BUSINESS ONLY, WITH TREASURE RULED OUT

**H**E MUST have been one of the Vaughans or the Smiths, that man who lent us a chart and spoke of Oak Island. In all the world there is not another treasure story just like it. Imagine a place, here in the New World, where a coin bearing the date 1301 has been discovered.

Once clear of Chester Harbor, we were out on the broad waters of Mahone Bay and there rolled in from the sea a short chop driven by a weighty wind to which we should have reefed, although we did not. We made a long board to the westward and fetched up near Oak Island. There are more than three hundred islands in Mahone Bay—three hundred

and sixty-five, say perfectionists—and Oak Island is not very different from most of them. Simply a grass-and-tree-dotted clay-and-gravel affair with an anchorage called Smith's Cove. As well it might be; Jack Smith was one of the three who first landed there in the fall of 1795: Jack Smith, Anthony Vaughan, and Daniel Maginnis. In those times, the mainland was but sparsely inhabited and no one lived on the islands in the bay. So it is not difficult to imagine the trio's feelings when they found a live-oak tree, one limb cut off short and bearing marks of its having been used as a place to swing a tackle. Beneath the limb there was a circular depression about twelve feet in diameter.

And, though they did not realize it, live-oaks are rare north of Virginia and nonexistent in Nova Scotia save for the solitary exception of those on Oak Island, some of which survive to this day.

If the wind had been less hard and the short, steep sea less trying, perhaps we would have gone ashore instead of rolling and plunging past. But there was also a caretaker to contend with, so we let it go; there is a caretaker because the Oak Island treasure is still a live issue and stock companies have worked there just as if the treasure were a matter like selling cosmetics or automobiles. Those first three discoverers dug down ten feet and struck a strong platform of three-inch oak planks, but, lifting it, they found nothing and continued to dig; twenty feet below the surface they came to a second plank platform. Beneath it there was nothing; digging deeper, they found a third platform at thirty feet. And at this point they decided that they needed help.

Help, at first, was hard to get; the old people said there was

something queer about Oak Island, and there was talk of lights having been seen there in the very earliest days of settlement, and there had been camp fires, and boats that had gone to investigate had not returned. But the three worked on and a fourth joined them; it was this last who formed a company. They found some odd things. On the shore there was encountered an ancient ring bolt of iron apparently used to moor ships. In sinking the shaft to a depth of ninety-five feet they met, at ten-foot intervals, platforms of planks and, of all things, a thick layer of putty, beneath which was found a layer of some tropical fiber like sisal. Also there was a layer of charcoal. At ninety feet there was found a flat stone, thin, about three feet long and a foot and a half wide, and on its surface were inscribed series of mysterious characters undecipherable to the treasure hunters. In 1896 that stone was in a bookstore in Halifax.

Naturally, they thought they were close, at last, to the treasure, but immediately after finding the stone the shaft filled with sixty feet of water.

Second generation, third generation, fourth generation, they have all worked on this treasure. Stock companies have been formed and they have gone broke. Other shafts have been sunk, only to flood. Samples have been brought up with drills, and these are the strangest things of all. One hundred and ten feet below the surface a drill broke through solid oak and into what the drillers claimed was metal. To substantiate the claim there came up three links from a golden chain.

At a depth of one hundred and thirty-six feet, drilling discovered oak and iron and at one hundred and fifty-three feet concrete, as certified by a chemical laboratory. Again and

again it struck loose metal. And from this great depth was recovered a scrap of parchment bearing fragments of handwriting too disconnected to have meaning. A tunnel connecting the treasure pit with the sea was discovered and then it was found that part of the beach had been rebuilt by men. A layer of big stones had been laid with five drainage cuts running through it. This had been covered with a layer of cel grass and then another of the sisal fiber and then sand and gravel. From that huge sponge the tunnel led to the treasure room revealed by the boring, and it is to this arrangement that the failure to penetrate to it is laid; every shaft floods as soon as it gets far enough to be significant.

The last great effort to get to the treasure came only a couple of years before we passed the island in the wallowing little *Dolphin*. There had been dynamite, pumps, drills, and good engineering, but whoever buried whatever it is that is down there a hundred and fifty feet beneath the ground was a better engineer, for flooded shafts beat every attempt. And there the matter rests: an unidentified coin with the date 1301 has been found and an old whistle. Also there are the live-oaks, the sisal, and the red clover that grows nowhere else in the province.

Who did it or why, no one knows. Pirates are ruled out by the depths, and the suggestion that an early Scandinavian colony is responsible seems equally untenable, because enough men to have done what seems to have been done should have left some evidence of their stay besides a coin and a whistle. To me, it seems that Oak Island is a place, not for the treasure hunter, but for the archaeologist.

Nielsen would have none of it. "Treasure in a place like

that!" he declared scornfully. "When I dig treasure, it'll be on an island with palms and banana trees. I'm not digging in no Oak Island."

But Robbie and I demurred; the place was bleak and plain, but we would have dug there gladly; that is, if the *Dolphin* had not been under our feet with some important hunting, trading, and prospecting in view. We brought the schooner about under the island and slammed off on the other tack, not particularly discouraged by a point and a half of leeway nor alarmed by her tendency to pound forward as she hammered at the lop with her spray-buried forefoot. I have no idea how many times we did that; how many times we came around and, tack on tack, fought to windward. But I do know it was a great many. And we discovered that "roll" on a large vessel is one word while "roll" on a thing like the *Dolphin* was another. It is useless to attempt a catalogue of her movements, for they were too varied. She tired us out with her leaping and we could barely keep our feet. The stove, it turned out, would not cook; close hauled on the port tack, the back wind of the foresail shot down the stack and drove clouds of soot and ashes out into the cramped cabin. Also, we were not a little seasick.

Late in the afternoon we got under a bare isle with a wooden lighthouse on it, Hobson's Nose, and the water smoothed out. We were none too sure of the entrance to Heckman Anchorage; none of us had ever navigated or piloted before and my knowledge of such things was book knowledge, which somehow had neglected to tell me that the world seen from the water is not as the world seen from the air, and it was so the chart presented it. It was pure luck

that we paid any heed to the warning figures on a hilltop and slipped into the opening they indicated. In anchoring, we neglected to drop the jib, Niels, who knew better, being too self-contained to offer the suggestion; so we sailed frantically around the hook until the headsail had been doused.

Randolph was laughing heartily when he rowed out in a dory and said that, yes, this was Heckman Anchorage and he was the sailmaker.

For thirteen years I have known Randolph and there is no single man in the world for whom I have more respect. I have lived in his house for months while remodeling a fishing schooner; long afternoons I have spent in his loft watching him rope a new sail, the bright needle never pausing as he recited from memory the whole of *The Lady of the Lake*; I have lain in the bottom of his motor boat helplessly sick with malaria brought from another and greener world while he found his way home in a thick fog; I have watched him follow a soaring gull with his eyes for the better part of an hour, only to hurry to his needles and make a model sail that copied the feathered perfection he had seen; and I take a deep pride in saying that today he still regards me as a friend and accepts me practically as an equal. Randolph is the purest example of the English yeoman transplanted to the New World, the blood of the men who drove cloth-yard arrows through the mail of French knights at Agincourt strong in his veins; the devil of steam-and-iron industrialism has had no opportunity to stunt and degrade him as it has done those who stayed in the island that developed the type.

He has fourteen children and not one has turned out to be other than a credit to the father and mother. He has lived

happily with one good wife since their youthful marriage. When he was nine years old he had to leave school and go fishing, but on his book shelves there are good books and he knows every one of them by heart; every night, at home, he brings out a gigantic Bible and, laying it across his knees, commences to read, an operation that usually puts him to sleep in fifteen or twenty minutes. Saturday night there is no Bible reading, for then his wife and daughters have an enormous panful of dough that only a stout-armed man can knead and up go his sleeves for a half-hour tussle with the great white wad they make into good bread.

"Gets my hands clean for Sunday," he explains gravely, although his eyes twinkle.

He makes good sails, honest ones, and his land is tilled with talent. If I heard that Randolph had told a lie or done some mean thing, I would refuse to believe it; if you start thinking that a straight line is not the shortest distance between two points, you will end without geometry. Randolph is a successful and happy man; I know few such.

Randolph put our feet under his long board and fed us several giant meals. His wife baked some pies and gave us a bag of potatoes, nor would she permit talk of payment. We were introduced to a retired sea captain who had made the Labrador voyage several times, commanding a ship when he was under twenty. We met an ancient who had been there and could recall the birds' eggs he had eaten, but nothing more; he said we were starting too early. And we met Randolph's father.

The old gentleman was more than ninety and had but one leg; a year before, a threshing machine had destroyed the

missing one and grievously misused him. But he was a remarkable man. He and his wife were surrounded by a hundred and forty-some living descendants: children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. They had more than any other couple in the province and had, I believe, received some kind of medal or citation. He introduced the spoon bow to Nova Scotia and I saw remarkable half-models of ships he had turned out: fast, graceful Tancook models and double-ended "whalers," links between the Maine pinky and the longboats of the New England whale-hunting ships.

We asked old Mr. Stevens about the Oak Island treasure and he told us substantially the things I have already set down. "But that's nothing, lads," he said; "nothing. No one ever got the treasure. But with these same eyes I saw treasure taken out of Hobson's Nose."

"Now, Grandfather, you'll excite yourself!"—warning from a pretty young girl.

"No, I won't. It was 'most eighty years ago and I was fishing with another boy in a dory off the point here. And we saw stand in from the sea a black vessel—strange, a foreigner—and she luffed up by the Nose and a small boat went ashore. We were scared to row over; in those days we were careful. But her people stayed on for several hours, and finally we saw them bear a heavy thing to the beach. Then they got in their small boat, went aboard, and the schooner filled away and put to sea again.

"I can still remember it. We boys went over and we found a hole in the ground and over it was a shearlegs and a block and fall and the marks of the big chest. Later on, we heard that it had been a treasure; an American girl found the record



of it in her family papers and chartered that vessel to take her to Hobson's Nose and, by gum, she got it.

"You shouldn't go to Labrador—there's nothing there—you should stay in Mahone Bay and dig for treasure."

"Dad may be right," said Randolph later on. "Right on this point we've got the remains of an old French fort and when we're plowing we turn up cannon balls and metal buttons and arrow heads. That island over yonder had a massacre on it; the Micmacs cut a schooner's cable and when she drifted ashore they killed everyone on her, and that is why we call it Sacrifice Island to this day."

"And don't forget the *Young Teaser*," one of the boys reminded. "People see her blow up even nowadays."

Randolph snorted. "Those that see her blow up are always seeing queer sights. It is the rum they drink that gives them notions. But she did blow up. That was one of your Yankee warships. The *Young Teaser* was an American privateer during the War of 1812 and two big English frigates chased her into the bay here. She got herself over under Tan-cook by rowing; it was calm or she would have escaped, for she was fast. And the frigates came in from the sea and had her cornered, and there was an English deserter aboard who knew he'd be hanged and he touched off the magazine. It was the loudest sound ever heard in Mahone Bay and pieces of her were all over. There are bodies of her people buried on the islands right now. My father can tell about it; it happened in his father's time, you know."

It was a fine, strange place with the feel of history in it, Mahone Bay, but we could not go in for such impractical and visionary schemes as hunting buried treasures; we were hard-

headed traders, hunters, and prospectors, bound on a serious business enterprise with exactly the kind of ship best suited to the purpose. In Randolph the eternal boy is always near the surface and it seemed to him, too, that so legendary a land as Labrador must have in it golden rocks. "You can bring back your gold," he said (and he was completely serious), "by jettisoning your ballast. You've got two tons of it in her and if you replace that with two tons of gold—well!" If he had had no family, I am sure Randolph would have been off with us.

I went into Lunenburg with Randolph, having the intention of making some small purchases, and I saw the Lunenburg fleet back from the "frozen bait" trip and preparing for the summer on the Banks. The harbor was thronged with magnificent schooners, big and fast and handsome, tall topmasts soaring from their lower sticks and all the gear there to swing the clouds of canvas. Through the streets rumbled drays loaded with sails and nets. At the blacksmith's shop, anchors, mast bands, boom fittings, "Yankee jibers," and every manner of ironwork for a vessel were being forged. The oarmakers and blockmakers worked from daylight to dark in a rambling shop where I saw a hundred-year-old model of a frigate made by a French deserter who had died in the local jail. Scores of stout fishermen paraded through the streets in seaboots, jerseys, and (some) berets, for that style was just being introduced by the bootleggers. In the air was the sweet chink of calking mallets, the whirl of band saws cutting into new wood, the thump of heavy mauls driving big spikes into the sides of rugged ships. Money was being made and spent and the price of fish was high.

Today it is all gone; of that busy and beautiful scene I saw that morning nothing now remains, for it has been ruined. The splendid fleet, the finest fishing fleet in the world still under sail, is gone; hundred-ton bankers were sold to the Newfoundlanders for two and three thousand dollars, all they would fetch, although it had cost thirty thousand to build them. What few remain have Diesels in them, and the topmasts are gone and in some the bowsprit has been hacked off and the mainsail replaced with a trysail, dirtied and blackened by exhaust smoke. The depression drove down the price of fish and at the worst of it the catches on the Banks got as bad as they have been within memory. The two together, extended over a period of years, destroyed Lunenburg; old fishing firms went to the wall, the industries that surrounded the fitting out of the beautiful ships were extinguished, and, as I have said, they were all but given away to Newfoundlanders who came rattling in their pockets the money of their government subsidies. Today Lunenburgers wonder if they can attract tourists.

When we got back we found some of the family down with the mumps and we had our last breakfast out on the steps in the sunshine. Afterwards we told them all good-by, and somehow got the motor started, for it was calm. Only Randolph was able to wave us off; everyone else was mump-bound.

It was Nova Scotian springtime, with a hint of growth and fertility in the breeze that sprang up not long after the motor stopped for reasons unknown to us. It was a quartering breeze and the sea raised was small, so we snored along supremely content with ourselves and our boat; excepting, perhaps, me, for I was nervous as a cat about my coastwise naviga-

tion. The courses I laid down seemed always to bring us up well to one side or the other of the point at which I aimed and the land looked discouragingly different from the chart. We could not judge her speed within fifty per cent of the truth and we had no log. When a lighthouse appeared I was afraid it was some other than the one it should have been, and Halifax Harbor looked very unconvincing; at the entrance, fortunately, there was a loaded schooner bound in, and we followed her.

The *Dolphin* did not have a small boat of any sort, for there was no place to stow one. We planned, as I recall the matter, to tie up to docks, where there were docks, and nose her into the shore wherever it was steep-to and the water smooth. That we might find places where there were no wharves, where there were no steep-to spots, and where the water was rough, had not occurred to us. I believe that I have indicated our ignorance. Nielsen had behind him twenty years at sea in steam and sail, but he had never learned even the rudiments of navigation. Robbie had eight years at sea in big steel freighters, and I had my summer voyagings. But not one of us knew anything at all about small boat sailing and cruising, and any Long Island Sound yachtsman could have told us simple truths that would have gone a long way toward preventing much of what happened. On the other hand, had we had such advice we would not have gone, and never would we have seen giant icebergs under our lee as a big swell slatted our sails in the motionless air; we would never have stood on an eminence in the Button Islands with Labrador to the south and the dim outline of Baffin Land to the north; we would not have seen the surly Indians, or the

happy-go-lucky Eskimos; we would not have become the smallest vessel ever to be sailed to Hudson Strait.

We found a wharf in Halifax after considerable window shopping and tied up to it with difficulty. Before we had been there an hour, a smooth, overdressed gentleman surveyed us and asked for the skipper. He had a dangerous though well-fed look and his politeness and polish were so studied that you felt they would break at any moment and leave him in a storm of fierce talk, ugly threats, and forthright bullying. With him was a colorless man who said nothing, looked nowhere, and never took his right hand out of his coat pocket.

"I'd like to go aboard a vessel off the lightship and I'm willing to pay for the trip. Can you do it?" So he opened his conversation.

I said we could, but would have to have a chance to think it over.

"How much will you boys charge me?" he asked genially, although his eyes were hard and cold.

"Well," I hesitated, "ten dollars, maybe."

"Fine!" he exclaimed. "Fine. I've got to go to the hotel and get some things together. I'll treat you right on this. I always treat people right when they treat me right."

Reluctantly we agreed to take him in the morning.

Niels shook his head gloomily. "You was a fool," he told me. "That guy wants to go bad, and everybody else around must have refused. Else why did he come to us as soon as we been tied up? There's something rotten and ten dollars ain't no money."

Still glooming, he went ashore to buy a couple of shackles; within fifteen minutes he was back. "You can do what you

want," he said, "but that guy that wants to charter us was in the hardware store and he was trying to buy a revolver as big as a cannon. And I asked some other boats; he's a crook doing business with the rum runners off shore. That's a rum ship he wants to go to and they're all afraid he's a hijacker. You can go if you like, but that guy was buying a gun."

We did not go, but our racketeer turned a little nasty when we told him that we had vetoed the idea because we had seen him buying a gun. As well as I could tell, from what he said, the gun had been purchased for sentimental reasons. Our attitude was final and he left us, the unpleasant accents of Lower East Side New York protruding jaggedly from the carefully controlled speech he had used with us at first. We went about, after that, in fear and trembling while we bought rifles, rope, blocks, oatmeal, leather caps, and all the rest of our simple supplies, for we were afraid that he would have his silent companion, who never took his hand out of his coat pocket, do something undesirable to us. It made the business of fitting out for a voyage to Labrador and Hudson Strait even more hurried than we had intended it to be and as, indeed, it was forced to be by the very scantiness of the list of necessities we proposed to take with us.

When we regarded ourselves as ready, we had canvased the leaky cabin top, filled the twenty-gallon tank with gasoline, and filled with water a forty-gallon wooden cask and a fifteen-gallon breaker, these being lashed on deck and in the forward cockpit; we had stowed in every knothole and cranny the utensils for cooking an exceedingly ill-balanced diet; we had tied over the communal bunk two wartime Mausers and a pipe-on-a-stick kind of cheap shotgun. We had a "blue

back" chart of the route from Belle Isle to Boston that had seen fifteen years' service on a fishing ship and looked it. We had another small-scale affair of the whole Labrador coast and we had a third dealing with the entrance to Hudson Strait. We had pencils, a parallel rule, a pair of dividers, a two-and-a-half-inch liquid compass, and a copy of Bowditch's *American Practical Navigator*. Since we were also to prospect, I find it difficult to say why we had no pick or shovel, but we did not, and it was with this outfit, aboard a thirty-foot center-board schooner, that we set out for ultimate Labrador and Hudson Strait. Characteristically, we did not bother to obtain clearance papers, registration, bills of health, or even evidence of ownership. We simply sailed.



## OF ERRORS AND GALES

LOOKING back on this, my first cruise in my first small boat, I marvel that we did not murder each other. For nearly six months the three of us lived together in a space nine feet long, eight feet wide, and five feet deep. Of the eight feet of width, only four feet had available the five-foot head-room. For part of the voyage, we endured Reuben's outrageous communal bunk. The stove gave little heat and it burned fabulous quantities of hard-to-get wood. For plumbing there was the bowsprit, in half-way decent weather; in bad weather there was the empty paint bucket that had contained the cheap paint with which we had smeared the pine boards of the cabin trunk. Dishes, clothes, and faces were washed in a big galvanized pail.



There were also our difficult personal arrangements. Nielsen was thirty-six or thirty-seven and an experienced seafarer who knew what a lower topsail yard looked like in a gale of wind; I was eighteen and knew nothing. Yet I was the master of this absurd ship; I had conceived the voyage, I had planned its execution, I owned the *Dolphin*. I was the only one who knew *anything* of navigation and I thought myself a man, although I was three inches shorter and nearly forty pounds lighter than I am today. Niels could hardly have failed to be galled by serving—without pay—under such a young crackpot. I presume that he more or less imagined he would automatically evolve into master, owing to my ignorance and incompetence, and, though it did not turn out that way, the conflict continued until the day Niels walked forth alone and met disaster.

To Robbie these considerations meant little. He did not care who commanded, where we went, so long as it was new, and he took such pride in defeating the devil who inhabited the miniature stove that ultimately he became cook. Niels and I both made gestures toward doing our share of the galley duties, but the messes we concocted were so villainous and the dirty plates in which we served them so greasy and horrible that Robbie, in rage, drove us from the stove and did most of that work himself. I do not think Niels and I were deliberately sloppy with the intent of bringing Robbie to this pass, but I am sure wishful thinking and unmoral sub-consciousness had much to do with it.

They were both big men, very blond, and they had much courage. As to imagination, I cannot say that they were

gifted, but good companions they certainly were. Although Niels was silent and melancholy, he possessed a dry humor of discomfiture that made many unpleasant things seem less so and, when well filled with hot oatmeal and codfish, he often yarned to us by the hour about ports and places and the numerous bad captains under whom he had served.

Robbie was born near King's Lynn, in Norfolk, the son of a farmer, and his broad shoulders were prematurely bowed and rounded, for he had been put to plowing and heavy field work while still so young that his bones had not hardened enough to stand such ill use. He was as optimistic as Niels was not, and while the Dane used English with a strong accent I shall not attempt to reproduce here, Robbie spoke in good rural English fashion; he knew dozens of country songs and often we would hear him, during his watch on deck, intoning them to himself and the sea. Of late I have heard some of them on the radio, but the ring of genuineness was gone out of them, probably because the singer had never been plow-bent. Once, when a small boy, Robbie had been standing by a country lane and King Edward VII came by a-hunting. He told Robbie he was a fine-looking little man and gave him a shilling. Without a word of thanks to the monarch, Robbie ran home as fast as he could and got paddled by his mother for the discourtesy.

So it is plain that there was every reason why we should have got no farther than Newfoundland. We went much farther, but I cannot explain why, and even when the end came it was not due to these obvious defects of organization and equipment.

The first night out of Halifax we suffered a half-gale from the northwest and there was much rain and lightning. The schooner leaked a bit and the pump jammed and the lantern we used to light the cabin was smashed. We were all rather seasick, Niels blaming his puking on the fumes of the engine, which had been running for perhaps a half-hour, while Robbie asserted that smoke from the stove had caused his trouble. With less originality, I said that something I had eaten had disagreed with me. None of us would own to seasickness and, so as to maintain the fiction, we listened to each other's specious ills with sympathy and easy belief.

The full horror of the communal bunk now became apparent. We hove the schooner to under a reefed foresail, although it was not absolutely necessary, and jogged offshore with the helm lashed and the three of us miserable below on that sleeping platform. Every now and then she rolled violently and we tumbled into a heap on one side or the other; if the roll was to starboard, Robbie and I piled up on Niels, and if to port, Robbie and Niels piled up on me. Being seasick, we had not the power to resist this process and the whole night we wallowed there in misery; if one of us had had the strength to say: "Here, this is foolish; let's give up!" I am sure the other two would have agreed and the cruise would have ended as fast as ever we could have got the *Dolphin* back to port.

But no one said it, and when daylight came we had recovered our sealegs and stomachs. The wind had gone down and the land was no longer in sight. Robbie made a fine breakfast, and under the sunshine we began to feel in excel-

lent spirits; no sensible determination came out of our first encounter with rude and violent weather.

With some ceremony, I drew on the chart the course I believed us to have sailed during the night and with the dividers I walked off the distance we should have made good. Around the point so established I traced a two-mile circle and from it I drew a new course permitting us to close with the coast near the entrance to the Gut of Canso; it was our intention to sail through this narrow passage and from it to Prince Edward Island, whence a course could be shaped for Anticosti and the Canadian Labrador. But somehow a ludicrous error on the part of the navigating department changed our plans.

In the afternoon we sighted the coast and, with a fair wind, moved east. Once we saw a steamer hard aground by a lighthouse; I was unable to identify the light with certainty. When darkness came, we had a sprinkling of shore lights in sight astern. Presently they dipped and, alone on the black, phosphorescent water in a rising wind, we made good progress, running wing and wing. By midnight we began to wonder where the lights about the entrance to the Gut might be, and when dawn came we were once more on the empty face of the sea, with neither land nor ships to indicate what had happened. It was very trying. Niels viewed the miscarriage of navigation with an air that showed him to be a forbearing man but, nonetheless, witness of no more than he had expected. Robbie was annoyed, and I was having shattered all my confidence in charts and compasses.

We hauled her north and headed for where the coast

should be if Nova Scotia had not foundered during the night. Hours went by and still the sea was gray and empty. Once a black schooner appeared and made for us, but when she was close enough to see us well she bore off again; we surmised that she must be a rum runner. It was noon before we saw land.

When we did it seemed to fit nothing on the chart. There were tall bluffs and offshore there was an island. The sea calmed and the wind died. Mirage appeared and became the *fata morgana*. Beyond the mysterious island rose a jagged, illusory coast, and several small schooners, with dyed sails and features we had not seen before, came out of hidden bays and inlets. It was utterly puzzling. Try as I would I could not make it fit the coastline as delineated on the chart, but I maintained confidently that we were approaching the Gut and said that the island offshore was Madame Island.

So we drifted slowly between mainland and island, looking to see the Gut of Canso beyond, and nothing happened. Under power we ran over to the island and found on it two lighthouses, which was certainly more than Madame Island had. Also, the distance between coast and island was much larger than it should have been, and beyond there was only the ocean. Nevertheless, I said that the chart was old and that the second light must have been established since its publication. Of the distance and the landless ocean beyond the island I said nothing; if a theory is necessary enough, almost any fact can be bludgeoned into fitting it.

We returned to the big cape we had left and rounded it. Again we found that the land ended, for beyond there was only the sea.

"For God's sake," said Robbie, in exasperation, "stop chasing the cat and ask one of these fishing schooners where we are! You don't know and you won't admit it."

Niels merely smiled and went below; as for Robbie's remark, it was quite accurate: I did not know where we were and I would not admit it.

But to satisfy them (as I put it) I permitted the schooner to be headed for a little vessel some miles beyond the cape. She was farther off than she looked and it took a long time to reach her. When we did, we ran up under her and hailed the crew.

"Do you mind telling us, Captain, the name of that big cape over there?" I was formally casual. But the pose did not last long.

"No, I don't," the fisherman replied. "That's Cape North, and if you're planning to cross the straits tonight with that deckload I'd advise you not to, for the glass is falling fast."

We thanked him and talked no more, because (a) none of us had heard of Cape North, (b) what he had had the poor taste to mistake for a deckload was our over-high cabin house, and (c) the news that the glass was falling frightened us—we ourselves had no barometer aboard. As soon as we had filled away and were out of earshot, we brought the chart on deck.

And though we searched it minutely, there was no Cape North on it.

"I don't care what the chart says," Robbie bawled; "a cape like that is bound to be on it. Turn it over and look on the other side. Damn it, we may be in Labrador already."

I smiled at this jest, as I chose to regard it, and turned the

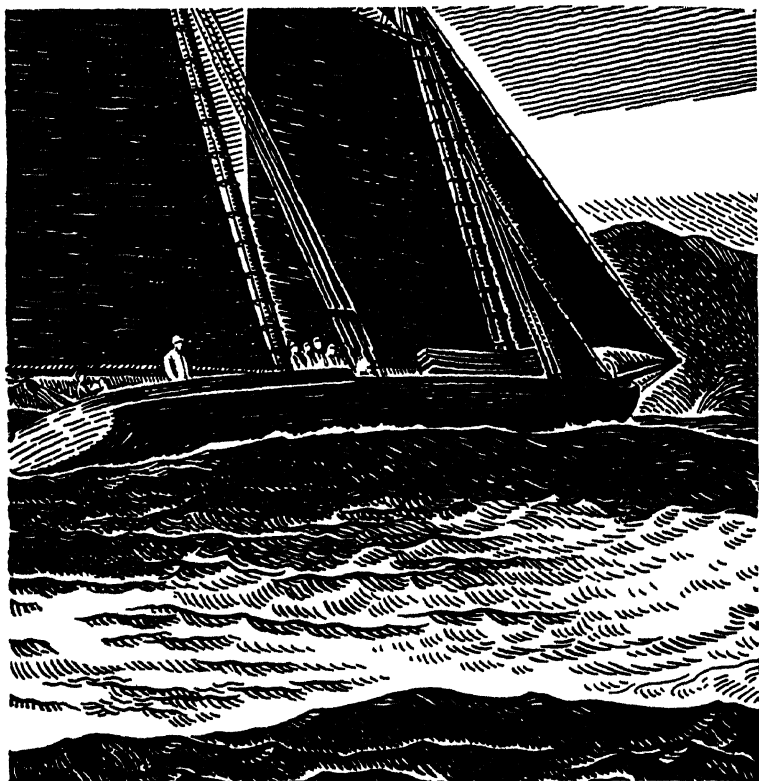
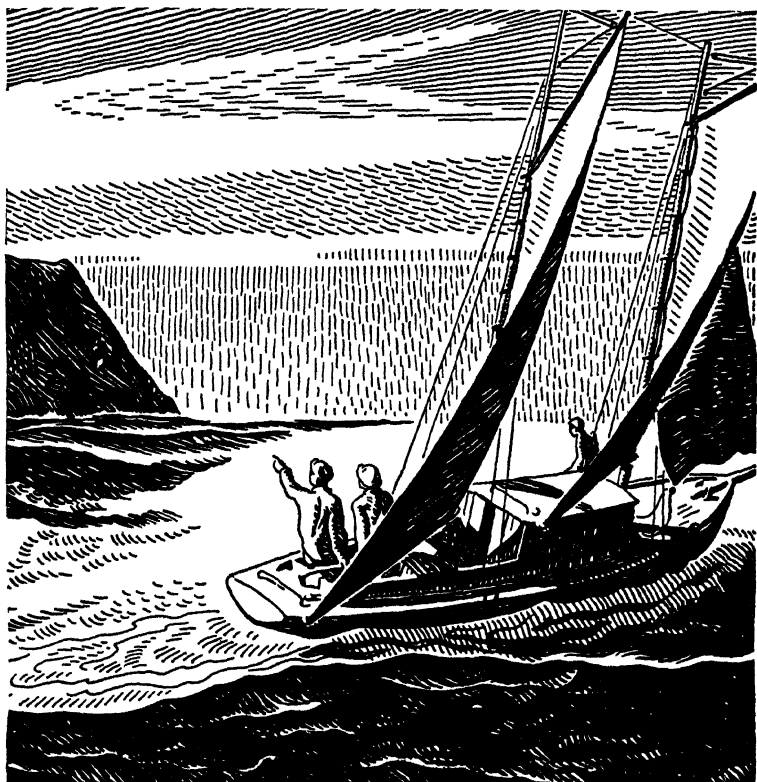


chart over. And in almost no time at all I saw Cape North; it was the very northern tip of Cape Breton Island and more than a hundred and fifty miles from where I thought we were.

I jumped to my feet. "That fool is lost!" I shouted. "Why, that's a hundred and fifty miles from where we are. Cape North! Of all the —"

Nielsen chuckled sardonically.



But he was not lost, that fisherman. The island was plainly St. Paul Island, and beyond was Cabot Strait. The coast heaved up by the mirage had been Newfoundland. What I had taken to be a light west of the entrance to the Gut of Canso was really Scatari Light, and a few more hours on our original course would have brought us to Newfoundland. I had erred in my navigating by more than a hundred and fifty miles and the glass was falling.



Nielsen was in agreement when I suggested that we might best find an anchorage under Cape North, in a cove shown on the chart, but I was loath to admit that this, my first boat, had to hide from the sea when it was angry. And when we passed Cape North, its head buried in cloud masses, instead of looking for an anchorage, a refuge from bad weather, I squared the boat away for Cape Ray, in Newfoundland.

By eight o'clock in the morning a strong gale was blowing from the northwestward and a big sea had been lashed up; the waves had driving white crests and cold, steel-gray flanks.

While it was still dark, we had been forced to get in the mainsail and before the gale had established itself the jib came off her. Then the foresail was reefed, and ranging slowly ahead, about six points off the wind, we lay to. Not quietly, but perhaps that was our fault, for, with the tiller, we tried to ease her off from the worst crests. Looking back on it, I realize we would have done better to have left the helm hard down and lashed it there.

Since the gale came out of the northwest, it was bitterly cold and brilliantly clear save for a pale haziness about the horizon and the flying white clouds, through which the sun broke regularly. The sea that gradually built up arranged itself into orderly formations with long gray-green slopes, gloomy declivities into which we fell with a great tobogganing only to rise vertiginously before the advancing edge of the next great sea, up and up, until we attained the dazzling white of the thundering crest. Having these crests over us again and again made us believe they intended to fall across us, crushing the decks and that ridiculous cabin house. But always she drifted away rapidly and climbed to the very top,

no more than heavy spray coming aboard. Nevertheless, the bellow of the water, audible even above the dominant roar of the gale, was a terrifying thing to hear and we all of us realized how small was this green *Dolphin* and how big was the Western Ocean.

Low on the horizon was the outline of St. Paul Island, a good fifteen miles away. The man at the tiller was relieved every four hours, since we worked on a three-watch system of four hours on and eight off, and the relief was a blessing because it let you go from the wild, cold deck to the damp, dark cabin, cold, too, but a little better than the spray-cursed cockpit and the tossing menace of the ever larger seas. Simply ducking your head inside shut out the roar of sound and for a brief instant gave the illusion of tranquillity; then the ears, used to the martel and mace attack of the thunderous sounds outside, were caught and held by the rapier of the song of the gale in the rigging, a shrill scream which, raised but a little higher, would have been inaudible. As it was, it was a tortured falsetto wail; whip-like and laden with deadly promises.

The two men below stayed on that sleeping platform of Reuben's; it was hard work to keep from being flung bodily from one side to the other, but still it was easier than the task of keeping afoot. As a galloping horse is to him who is not a horseman, so is a small boat in a gale to her crew, no matter how good their sealegs. Added to the measured rapidity of rise and fall, of roll and pitch, occasioned by the impersonal and common pattern of the wave-ranks, there were the infernal twists, breaks of rhythm, and unpredictable corkscrewings caused by the lesser and individual characteristics of each sea. And with physical exhaustion by this assault there

went mental and nervous strain from hearing small, unaccountable noises, which may or may not have been significant, amid the elemental symphony of wind and water.

Of course, it was merely that air was pouring from an area of high barometric pressure into an area of low pressure, its velocity regulated by the steepness of the isobaric gradients as inexorably as the flow of water is regulated by the incline of the surface over which it travels, and the sea was torn up and made dreadful by simple friction; nevertheless, it induced in me a religious mood, for the bald meteorology of the storm understates.

We regained our confidence when Robbie stuck his head into the cabin and shouted: "Come out here; there's a bloody big tanker plugging into it and she looks like Niagara Falls!"

The tanker was a huge steel vessel almost four hundred feet in length and she must have been going into the Gulf of St. Lawrence on her way to Quebec and Montreal. Her long black bow rose and fell regularly and every time it fell it scooped up blinding tons of green and white water; as the bow rose the whole chaotic welter rolled aft, swept the fore-deck, crashed solidly against the bridge, and tumbled in white cascades back into the ocean. The process was repeated endlessly as she slowly forged past us. Not a soul was in sight aboard her and from her low stack came an intermittent plume of smoke, broken as the weight of the wind drove it back, billowed out as the wind desisted momentarily with her violent though solemn rolls.

The lesson was plain: we were not as large as her largest lifeboats, but we were making better weather of it than the lonely tanker. It had a remarkably cheering effect on us and

we cooked, with difficulty, a huge pot of porridge and an immense quantity of hot coffee.

The gale continued unabated all day and all night and we grew weary and gloomy, and colder than seemed possible with the thermometer still somewhat above freezing. On the second day the wind moderated a trifle and, enduring the thumps and pounding, we began to sail her under the patch of foresail. Late that night we were near St. Paul and the wind lost still a little more of its weight. On went the reefed main and the jib; by daylight we were near the entrance to Atlantic Cove and, when they were well visible, we lined up the range targets and sailed into an anchorage beside three Newfoundland schooners.

I cannot say why, but we all felt as if we had accomplished great things.

Atlantic Cove was a bleak and dark place with vividly green patches of grass among the somber rocks. In one corner of it there stood a white-painted chute for the launching of the lifeboat. There were quarters for the boat's crew and a larger frame house where lived the island's commissioner and general factotum, as we discovered, for he rowed out and invited us to breakfast. "We saw you pass off to the north a few days ago," he said, "and we thought it was a deckload of lumber you had. Don't often see such high houses on little craft hereabouts." We contented ourselves with a grim tightening of the lips; this deckload thing was getting beneath our skins.

At St. Paul Island we spent two or three days, for the northwester, having dropped to the force of a moderate gale, continued to blow hard for all that time and, offshore, we

could see still running the plumed battalions of steely water. It was a lonely place, ice-bound during many months of the year, storm-bound during others, and without secure anchorage for the only people who found it worth while to come there. These, Newfoundland fishermen from Port aux Basques, came in schooners of about forty feet over all and fished about the island, making their base in Atlantic Cove; that is, while the wind was between north northeast and southwest. When it shifted, they had to up anchor and hurriedly betake themselves to a rocky and unprotected cove on the opposite side of the island. It must be a miserable life: to have hanging over you always the certainty that failure to guess when the wind will shift is self-imposed sentence to being held prisoner in the wrong cove by waves breaking clear across the entrance and then watching helplessly while a virulent sea, with violence and deliberation, tears your vessel from her anchors and casts her upon the rocks, where she is mauled to fragments and your livelihood and the livelihood of a numerous family in sterile Newfoundland are cut off in a matter of moments.

In those fishing gambles there is an inevitability of tragedy that belongs to the Greek drama. Sable Island, for instance: there on the bar is the richest kind of fishing, and the longer a vessel stays on it the faster she is filled, but if ever she is caught there in a rising gale she will be unable to get away. Her cable will have to be slipped and in the high, steep sea that makes up she is unable to get to windward once the wind attains gale force. And to windward she must go, because the penalty for failing is striking on the bar with the loss of the vessel and every soul aboard her. When a fishing ship is

long overdue in Lunenburg, you can usually hear the local proverb: "Sable Island makes sure work."

At St. Paul Island the same grim gamble is played. On the fisherman's side there are the cunning and weather knowledge of men born by the sea; there are a barometer, a motor, and the wirelessly storm warnings. On the side of the sea, there is the sudden onslaught performed before the watchful weather bureaus are apprised, by ships at sea, of the attack and before the barometer gives warning. It does not happen too often, but sooner or later it does and the shores of the two coves are littered with wreckage, as startling as a good advertising picture in its tale of the times when the gamble has been lost. In the end, it is always lost; the percentage of the house is too large for fair play.

There are also foxes on the island and the government employees there do some little trapping for them.

The commissioner told us very definitely that we would have to have a clearance to go to Newfoundland and the nearest place we could get it was at Neil's Cove, over on Cape Breton Island. At first we were inclined to pooh-pooh the idea; in a general way, we felt ourselves too small to bother with such formalities and thought it entirely possible that our personal charm would win over the strictest customs official. But the island man convinced us that these beliefs had little foundation and that the Newfoundlanders would be only too happy to confiscate the *Dolphin* if we attempted an illegal entry. So, when the northwester blew itself out, we hurried to Neil's Cove under power, charging along over a glassy sea that gave no hint of what had been there but a few days before.

Neil's Cove was wide open to the southeast and the woman in charge of customs affairs was reluctant to give clearance, since we were unregistered and had not, as I have mentioned, even evidence of ownership. Somewhere or other I had mislaid the bill of sale Reuben gave me. And while she was deliberating, a gale from the southeast blew up and the cove became untenable, for the sea drove straight into it. The motor then waxed temperamental and, while we worked and cursed over it, the wind and sea increased to a point that made beating out under canvas a doubtful project.

The fishermen there were fine. They drifted a long line down to us from a pier and that took the strain off our one anchor. Then one of them, acknowledged to know more about engines than any other man in the place, looked at our machine casually, remarked that there was water in the carburetor, drained it, and with a flick of the wrist filled the air with exhaust popping. By that time the wind had leveled off at the force of a fresh gale and even began to show signs of decreasing. So we let the *Dolphin* bucket wildly at the end of the borrowed warp and stood, ourselves, on the dock watching her and wondering how we managed to endure being inside her while she did such things.

A sly old fisherman sidled up to me and in my ear said: "Ye'd not be thinking o' selling yon wee boat cheaply, 'ud ye?"

I shook my head, but, though he never knew it, that old fisherman came very near to getting "yon wee boat" for nothing; I blamed on the *Dolphin* the advent of the southeaster and my own failure to give her the proper documents.

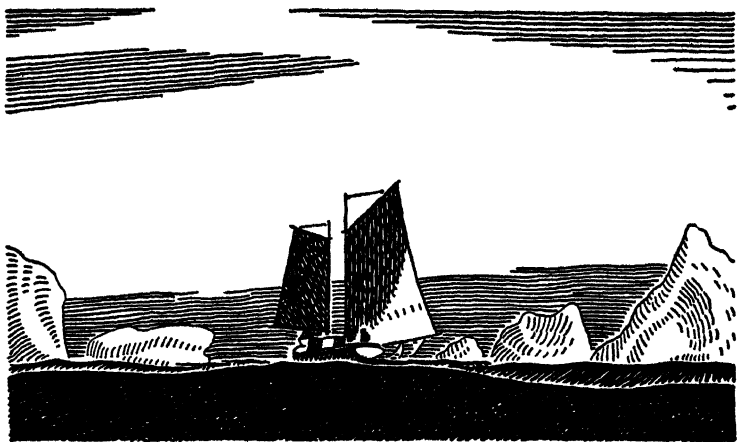
Our plight must have stirred up the rocks in the customs lady's heart and got through to the blood and tissue, for she relented and, saying that although it was irregular and sure to get her in trouble, she was giving us clearance and a paper stating that we were a British ship to the best of her knowledge and belief. I brought the clearance aboard and showed it triumphantly to Robbie and Niels. Niels studied it and when he saw my name in the space provided for that of the master he gave one colossal snort and retired into a dank silence which lasted forty-eight hours, save for the working of the ship. The marvel is that he did not pack his bag, tell me and my presumptuous ways to go to blazes, and take himself ashore.

I added to his disgust by deciding to sail before the southeaster had blown itself out. We came careering out of Neil's Cove with a reef in the mainsail and, burying our lee rail again and again, tumbling through the still heavy sea, once more we aimed as well as the diminutive compass and its unknown error would permit, for Cape Ray, the southwestern tip of Newfoundland.

When a bearing on St. Paul Island, abeam, showed we had averaged not more than seven knots from our departure at Neil's Cove, Nielsen's furious scorn was quite apparent and eminently just. There was every possibility of our being caught out in yet another spell of bad weather and pounded until we were so weary that we would put in anywhere in order to sleep. The wind, however, gradually lost its bite, but a dense fog rolled over us shortly after we sighted Cape Ray Light, dim and ghostly in the gray mists. When we were off



the fog signal at Port aux Basques, so thick was it that we dared not enter and, instead, stood on and off until daylight and a patch of clear air let us find the harbor entrance and stand up the channel to a dock at which there was moored a numerous fleet of fishing schooners.



## THE BEGINNING OF NIELSEN'S ADVENTURE

**P**ORT aux Basques clung disconsolately to the mossy rocks, and if there were any trees to speak of I have forgotten them. The streets tended to meander, there was a hotel where commercial travelers slept, and there was a railroad depot for an unaccountable train that came every now and then from St. John's. The houses were all of wood and they were painted white; foreigners were a rare event.

We gave our clearance to the customs collector, a short, fat man with a beard and a manner which said he had on his mind a single worry so great that he must be excused from thinking. He said that it was all irregular and would require

investigation. Then he inquired, wistfully, to know if we were rum runners. "We have a dry law here, you know."

We denied any hand in such matters and asked about the local dry law, which turned out to be a very curious piece of legislation. Thirsty Newfoundlanders had been cut down to a bottle of whisky or rum per diem and the allowance was sold through a government agency in St. John's, the supply coming to Port aux Basques whenever the train arrived. Here, as elsewhere, the experiment in what they seemed to think prohibition was not successful, for intemperate men soon discovered that they could induce their light or non-drinking friends to order the full quota and turn it over to them.

While we were waiting to see what the collector might decide, a red-faced captain, sly and drunk, came on board and swore and bragged for hours. He said he was goddamned if he would catch a fish and, what was more, he had the fastest vessel on the coast and the only cargo that ever went in it was raw, red Demerara rum. He said that when he felt the need of extra money he poured water into the rum and added cayenne pepper. "All these goddamn cods" (these being his customers) "want is to have their stinking throats burned out, and peppered grog does it as well as the good stuff." He winked elaborately and told how he had outwitted the collector, whom he maintained, unjustly, to be a drunkard. He told how he had reached port, safe and sound, when other men drowned and how he had made money that, in a month, was more than a fishing captain could get in a year. He leaned heavily against us and breathed foully; when he made points bringing out his own cleverness,

he thumped on our knees and leered knowingly as if we were also smugglers capable of the same feats as this old buccaneer.

I thought him a very admirable man and when he invited me—calling me “Cap’n”—aboard his ship I went willingly. She was a fifty-foot Nova Scotian and looked almost as fast as he said she was. But the walk along the dock in the bracing air sobered him somewhat and he became bored with my unfailing agreements; when we went down into the cabin, he knocked the neck off a bottle of rum and filled to the brim a pair of thick tumblers.

“’Sta confusion!” he rumbled, as he downed his at one gulp, and forthwith he fell face downward into a dirty bunk and went to sleep. I sat alone for a while expecting him to wake up, but he did not, only lying there with his half-toothed mouth open for prodigious snores. I drank the rum slowly, gagging at its power; when it was finished I was drunk, too, and hurried back to the *Dolphin*, humming and staggering.

On board there were two fishermen from a schooner that had been anchored in Atlantic Cove when we took refuge there and they were sad and discouraged; the captain had tried to start the engine the day we left and, having the spark too far advanced, the flywheel had kicked back at him and broken his leg. They were worried because the skipper’s brother (to whom command would have gone) was working in St. John’s and they felt that their fishing season would be spoiled. Afterwards they cursed, without profanity, the little money they got from their hard work, and dwelt bitterly on the unproductiveness of their small farms and the over-

productiveness of their wives. It was a cruel life, they said, and in their faces you could see that they told the truth. Finally one of them rose and said: "Will ye not go to the meeting with us?"

Robbie and Niels refused, but I, my head dizzy and my tongue thick, said I would and up the road and over barren hills we went to a church well filled with solemn, gash-mouthed fishermen. A shaggy oldster gave us a sermon about swearing and then we sang some hymns. After that a man with a red face and rheumy eyes got up and made an unsensational confession about having used bad language and drunk rum until he had been saved. Several others followed suit and we sang some more hymns. Then a tray was passed with a bowl on it and most of us contributed small coins. That ended the service and, at loss for other activity, in company of seven or eight fishermen, I and my original two companions walked back toward the wharf.

The long northern twilight was still with us and before we got to our vessels, we saw a girl following a path which crossed ours. She was a pudgy girl with long, yellow hair and a wide, expressionless face; she wore a sack-like cotton garment and a man's gray sweater. One of the fishermen threw a stone in her general direction and she giggled. At once we followed after her, the girl saying saucy things over her shoulder and the men replying with crude banter that got to the point at once. After a few minutes we came to a fork in the path and this seemed to signify something, for the men all stopped and looked expectant. The girl walked a short distance up one path and then stopped and turned

toward us. She called something I did not understand, but at once the fishermen seized my arms.

"There! There! She wants the stranger; it's always the way when there's a stranger. The girls are too used to us."

Chuckling, they thrust me forth from among them and, setting my feet on the path the girl had once more begun to follow, they gave me a push after her and themselves strode rapidly off in the direction of the harbor.

For a moment I stood bewildered and then, not wishing to seem a poor sort of fellow, I dutifully followed after her. We crossed the brow of a stark hill and by so doing were hidden from the town; at once she took to her heels. Now whether or not this was a conventional move in a Port aux Basques courtship I cannot say, but it discouraged me and I did not pursue. Instead, I sat down on a clump of bog grass that sprouted beside the muddy path and let half an hour go by. When it had, I returned slowly to the ship; the fishermen were all asleep and since, next day, they made no mention of the matter, it must be that they assumed the affair to have gone off according to schedule and custom.

It was here, too, that we tore up Reuben's sleeping platform and from it constructed three separate berths, a reform movement in which Robbie took a leading part. The mattresses used to cover the platform had been, one of them, a single size and, the other, double. So the double mattress was carefully cut in half and made into a pair that suited the size of Robbie's new berths. It now became apparent that the centerboard trunk need not be solely a curse; we built on it a table made from a single piece of wide pine

plank. By the time this was done the customs collector sent for me.

He looked very severe when I entered his office.

"I've decided to jail you!" he thundered. "Jail. Ho-ho! Ho-ho! It will be a great lesson to you!" And then, before I could say a word, he pushed across his desk a paper. "I'm joking," he explained. "I'm going to let you off this time. But no more peculiar comings and goings. This is a document that will permit your cruising the Labrador, though God knows why you want to go there."

I read it and it set forth our condition as a small craft, without registry, going cruising for pleasure on the Labrador. I opened my mouth to say it was not pleasure but business; I thought better of it, though, and shut it again.

The collector came around from behind his desk and extended his hand. "I hope you lads have a good trip," he said with great earnestness. "And now, good-by." Abruptly he returned to his desk and I went aboard with all we would need to explain ourselves to any customs men we might meet.

There was a fresh southwesterly breeze blowing when we left, under power, but after the seven-mile beat to Cape Ray it would be a fair wind, so we hastened to sea and, once clear of the harbor, began to get the canvas on her. She was leaping like a wild horse as the motor urged her into the rough sea and, up on the plunging foredeck, Robbie and I struggled to get the foresail on her, he with the peak halyard and I with the throat. It was confused activity, for, half the time, one hand was needed to stay with the *Dolphin*. At last, however, the throat was going up rapidly and, because it seemed

to me that Robbie was lagging with the peak, I shouted: "Heave! Heave, damn it! What's the matter? Can't you heave?"

Robbie said nothing and the sail was set and after it the jib and main. Then the engine was stopped and we commenced to beat up, a long leg and a short one, for the cape. But as soon as we were all coiled down and shipshape, Robbie came to me in the after cockpit and said in a level, indignant voice: "You listen to me now; I'll not have anyone speak to me as you spoke there on the foredeck. I am not quarreling or getting sore, but you remember it."

With that he turned away and went below to cook supper. I made no answer because all he said was frank and merited rebuke for my bad manners, but his having justice with him made it only the more galling and infuriating. Nielsen then began to be sick over the side, owing, he said, to gasoline fumes inhaled when he put his head below to cut off the engine. Robbie permitted himself to cast doubt on the story and mortally offended Niels.

We slugged her up to the cape and, rounding it before daylight, we laid her out, wing and wing before the increasing wind, on a course for Cape St. George, whence we proposed to head for the Strait of Belle Isle. But when we took our departure from Cape Ray no one of us was on more than the barest semblance of speaking terms with either of the other two.

The fresh wind, during the night, became a strong one and we took the mainsail off her, for there was a mistiness in the air that made seeing poor. By morning we were rolling along in a thick fog, the bowsprit just visible in the murk.



Niels insisted that the foresail be reefed so that we would progress slowly until the cold folds of fog that swirled about us should be dispelled, lest we run up on the projecting horn of Cape St. George. My error of a hundred and fifty miles in a few days' sailing, coupled with the sting of Robinson's pointed remarks, had left me little authority over the ship other than the official sort appearing on the clearance papers. Neither Nielsen nor Robbie took my place and we got along in a wretched tangle of unwilling co-operation and blank refusal to be responsible that made this one of the worst parts of the cruise.

When the fog lifted, we were far north of Cape St. George and off Mt. Blow-Me-Down, in the Bay of Islands. The wind died away as we hauled into the rugged coast and, after it had shifted, squalls came down from the mountains. One of them was a particularly bad one, the only warning of its advent being the swirl on the face of the water, and it got us almost unprepared. Niels and I were seated on our bunks with a pot of oatmeal before us. I had put too much water in it, so it was thin and gruelly. Just as Niels filled his tin plate with the stuff and put sugar and oleomargarine on it, Robbie's urgent voice summoned us out on deck.

The squall struck before we could get the main in and the Dolphin heeled far over on her side, the water boiling past, and sounds of bedlam issuing from the cabin. It was all over in five minutes and we got the sail back on her again. Niels and I went below.

With the greatest effort I held back the malicious laughter: squarely in the middle of his bunk was the overturned

plateful of sugared and oleomargarined porridge and beside it, on his pillow, was the upside-down pot. Nielsen's bunk was a horrible mess of burgoo and blanket hair.

He cleaned it with Christ-like resignation, his fury as well concealed as my wholly unadmirable delight. We made more oatmeal, and beyond a few philosophical remarks from Robbie nothing was said.

We entered the Strait of Belle Isle with beautiful weather, the sky clear and blue-black, for the sun had just set. Across from Flower Cove, on the Newfoundland shore, there were stretched before us the round, red hills of Labrador, cold and beautiful in the immense twilight. They were of even height, for the great ice sheet had made them so and, while they did not look capable of supporting life, they were more beautiful than any hills I had ever seen before. It got dark and the long streamers of the aurora played overhead, the greenish milky haze of it sometimes obscuring the metallic brilliance of the stars. We talked together casually for the first time since leaving Port aux Basques.

When morning came we were plunging through the sunlit sea under winged-out fore and main, the Dolphin careering along joyously like a hobbyhorse on the dewy green of an unmowed lawn. All about us there were immense and craggy mountains of ice, the first icebergs Robbie and I had ever seen; Niels had seen some when he went to Ivigtut, in Greenland, for a load of cryolite. They were also beautiful and since that splendid morning they have been symbols, in my mind, for absolutes: for the absolute of whiteness, for the absolute of aloofness, for the absolute of chastity. They were

tumbled out on the sea like lumps from a spilled sugar bowl. And we felt well about it; we had brought the *Dolphin* within sight of ice that had voyaged from distant Greenland.

Inshore, we saw fleets of fishing schooners with clipper bows; many had motor boats in tow. Belle Isle showed up on the starboard bow and, astern, Newfoundland dipped below the sparkling horizon.

It was magnificent sailing, but I almost failed to find Battle Harbor, the haven which was to be our first port of call on the coast. We were already leaving it astern when we saw the wireless towers and realized that in Labrador it was very unlikely so important-looking a station should be anywhere save in the principal port of this southern region. We succeeded in identifying some islands and other marks, so, following the big ship channel, we stood into St. Lewis Sound and then into the west entrance to Battle Harbor, using our motor. The entry was accomplished without difficulty and, seeing a dock before the largest buildings in the settlement, we headed for it. Someone shouted from shore that it was shallow ahead and we tried to reverse the engine, an act accomplished by cutting the switch and connecting it again just before the flywheel stopped turning. If properly done, the engine would then run astern, but in this case it was not and it stopped; we piled up gently on a weed-covered ledge.

At once a wildly rowed dory put out from shore and the someone who had shouted, a near-sighted, vehement man, wearing spectacles so thick and dirty with splattered fish blood that they seemed opaque, came aboard.

"I tol' 'oo it were shaller and 'oo paid no heed! Now

what's to do? Now what? How are 'oo coming off? Wait! Wait! I'll get my boat and pull 'oo offen here." He jumped back into his boat. "And mind," he snapped, "this is for favor, not for hire."

We tried to beat this helpful fisherman by getting the engine started again, but it lay there inert and stupid no matter what we did and in the end Old Harry pulled us off and dropped us beside the wharf. He told us his name was Harry something-I-have-now-forgotten, but the settlement knew him as Old Harry and not without reason, for he made home brew from molasses and got roaring drunk on the result, and he had once been in the hospital for iodine poisoning—he had drunk a lot of it while seeing the devil or some such thing; again, the exact details escape me.

We stayed in Battle Harbor several days just looking at it. The Grenfell Mission had a hospital there and a couple of nurses. There was the wireless station, there was the general store of Baine, Johnston and Company, there were the houses of the native fishermen of the place as distinguished from the summertime Newfoundlanders—Liveyers they are called because they "lives here." We asked about gold and fur and trade and found that the trade was divided among the Hudson's Bay Company, Revillon Frères, the Moravian Mission, and a sprinkling of Newfoundland commercial houses. The fur time was over; you went after that in the winter, and as for gold there was none so far as anyone knew. There had been a gold rush to Stag Bay, but it turned out that the gold was not gold.

So we asked about trout fishing and small shooting and were told that the best possible place was Mary's Harbor,

about nine miles up the sound. Having introduced a Labrador habit on board, we left for the place. The habit is that of sweetening tea with molasses instead of sugar; the poor devils on the coast cannot afford sugar and the strong, black molasses is their only sweetening.

As soon as we penetrated into the sound, the glittering procession of icebergs was lost, and the rounded, rocky hills were clothed with somber pine forest. Labrador is well south; Battle Harbor is in the same latitude as London. But the bitter Labrador current, ice-charged, keeps the coast and its island fringe in the Arctic, meteorologically if not geographically. Nevertheless, ascending the bays a few miles removes you from the influence of the current and, latitude asserting itself, the land is warmer. Often there can be found a difference of thirty degrees within fifteen miles.

Mary's Harbor was snug and utterly solitary. The only signs of men were in the ruins of a log hunting-shack on the shore. Otherwise there were only the dark, brooding pines, the lonely cries of kittiwakes, and the muffled roar of the rapids in the Trout River, a tumultuous stream entering the harbor only a few yards from where we anchored. Today all this is different, for the Grenfell Mission has moved its principal station to the harbor and there are big buildings, much activity, and numerous college boys and girls who pay board and work if they wish to—an application, in fact, of the dude idea to the mission field.

The first day, Niels and I went ashore, he with fishing gear while I had a shotgun. He took to the river and I walked inland, loving the desolate beauty of the place. The patches of pine forest were thick and hard to get through and, on

the open barren, the mosses were so spongy that walking was slow, tiring work. But there was no forgetting the blue-black of the pines, the endless gray-green of the barren, and the dark masses of rock protruding nakedly from the thin blanket of sour soil and stunted vegetation. I wandered back to the river and followed it for miles, trying to find a ford. Ultimately I gave up, for every shallow spot had a formidable rapid and, besides, I saw nothing to shoot, not a thing. Niels had done better, for he had a string of handsome brook trout, a circumstance that worked him into a fine humor.

We returned to the *Dolphin* and climbed aboard, for we were anchored by the stern and had our bow almost ashore; it was easy to jump from boat to shore and there was no danger, because the water was like a pond. That night we ate the trout and felt well about being in Labrador. We talked easily with each other and there was fairly good feeling, even though each of us remained in his offended little shell.

The next day was cold and gray, with a damp northerly wind. When Robbie said he was going to stay aboard and wash his clothes, I decided to do the same; the trout, though, had Niels fascinated and he went ashore. He took with him a rifle in case of a stray deer; also some spare ammunition and his fishing gear. He was dressed in warm clothes and over them he wore an oilskin coat; on his head there was a heavy sou'wester.

Three hours after he left, the wind from the north turned boisterous and blew so hard that a sea was kicked up even in this sheltered anchorage. So sharp was the chop that we were forced to come well clear of the beach and anchor by

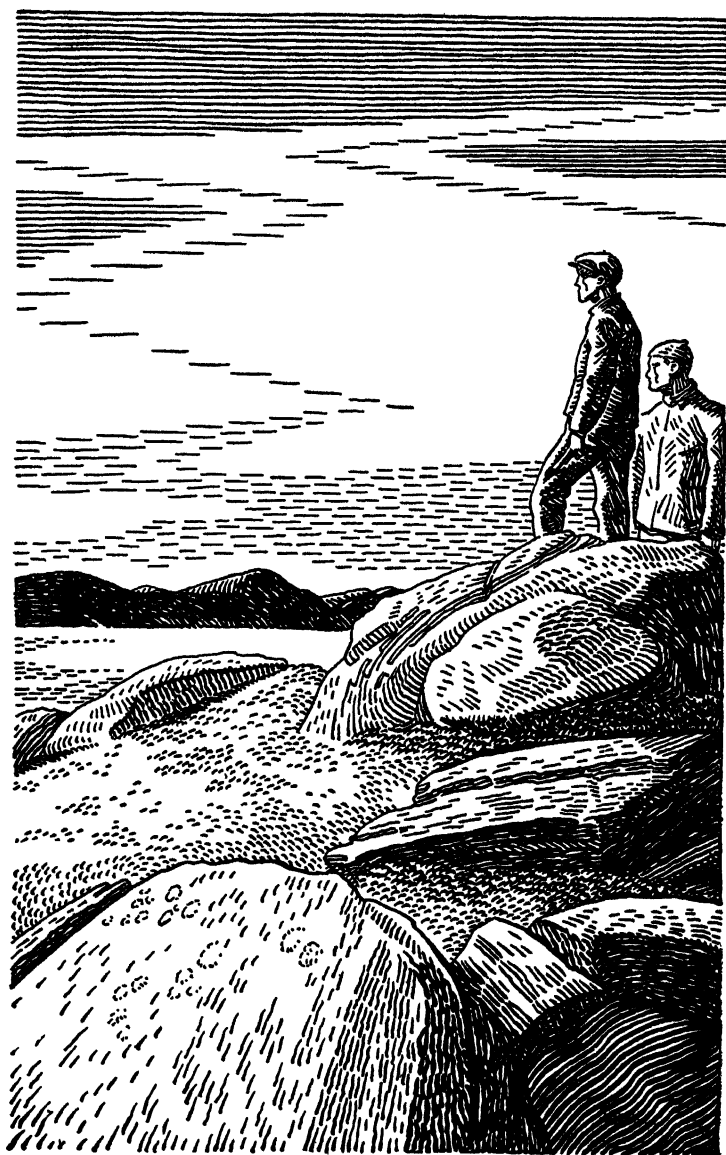
the bow, for the stern had been pounding badly. We wondered how Niels would get aboard and decided to put food and matches in a tin for him, letting it drift down on him when he appeared. The night he would have to spend in the ruined log cabin.

But Nielsen did not appear. Instead, the wind blew bitterly and blinding squalls of snow blotted out the land, although we were but a hundred yards away from shore and this was early in June. The afternoon passed and we began to get worried. By nightfall we were fairly frantic, firing guns and trying to make lanterns stay alight in the northerly blast. All night long we watched for him, striving to make our voices heard above the dismal howl of the wind, and often we fired shots. But when daylight came, Nielsen had not yet returned.

It was still too rough to risk bringing the schooner into the rocky shore and we were, of course, boatless. So, we put on our oilskins and, lashing them tightly over our bodies to make them as waterproof as possible, we dived into the frigid harbor and somehow managed to swim ashore without drowning. We were as soaked as if we had not tried to make diving suits of the oilskins and the water was just as cold as you might expect of water that buoyed up trillions of tons of ice.

We set out across the barren, noting carefully our way. We climbed high hills and stood patiently searching the landscape for a man. We discharged our guns regularly and shouted and hallooed until we were hoarse. But when the sun went down we had traveled miles and not found Nielsen.

Getting aboard nearly drowned me and I stripped in the





cockpit and changed to dry clothes before I drifted a line in to Robbie; half swimming and half tugged, he got out to the schooner and, at last, on deck. It was in this harbor, I believe, that there was born my hatred and distrust of a small yacht that has neither dinghy nor room to stow one. And then, tired and frightened, we sat in the cabin surveying the situation. We had seen the vastness of the barren and we knew that we needed local knowledge and lots of men. Nielsen, we reasoned, could have met an unpleasant accident—how unpleasant we dared not tell each other. He might have wandered far inland, where we could as easily lose ourselves searching. So many things could have happened.


I took up my abandoned authority.

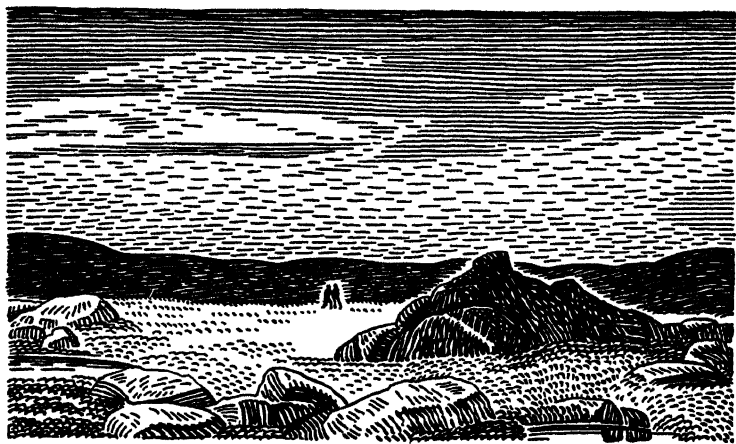
“We’ll go over to Battle Harbor at once,” I said, “and organize a search party.”

Robbie was in the most complete agreement.

In an hour and a half we had covered the nine miles to the settlement and told our story.

It was only when we saw distrust and suspicion struggling with the human desire to help in the faces of the men who listened to us, and saw the stony eyes of the magistrate, that we realized the full awkwardness of the situation not only for Niels but for ourselves.





## THE COURSE AND LIQUIDATION OF THE ADVENTURE

OLD Harry was the moving spirit in the organization of a search party, this being made up of men who hunted and trapped in the area where Nielsen had disappeared. There was Harry, there was Tom Cumby, there was a man named George (who swore in Elizabethan English and chewed great wads of tobacco), and there were a couple of young fellows who did not register. They soothed our alarm and as we filled our fuel tank with expensive gasoline I began to wonder if, on still another occasion, I was going to emerge looking the fool; Harry and his cronies were so confident that they would have no difficulty finding him.

"Where the man's lost, byes," Harry explained, "is no big piece o' land. Don't 'oo think it, byes. On this side is St. Lewis Sound; on t'other is the sea. And back in the country is a whole string o' little ponds and bogs such as no man can cross. It makes an island o' the peninsula; we'll find him, 'cause he can't get out o' a space 'bout ten miles long and only a few miles wide."

And I began to imagine rounding the entry point to Mary's Harbor to find Niels stalking the rocks in a surly Danish fury at the step we had taken to fetch him out. This final and extravagant incompetence would leave me no alternative to asking him to take command. And he might refuse to do so until I had fairly wallowed in apology and self-abasement. The fishermen would suddenly remember that they had been lured away from a profitable day's fishing in order to help a fellow-man, only to find themselves victims of a combination of bad judgment and youthful hysteria.

But, much as I dreaded the results of being wrong, the sight of the cold red hills in the morning light, stark and forbidding in their inhospitality, made me feel that, no matter what the penalty of being wrong, the bare chance of being right was ample reason for having brought a search party and having created a hullabaloo in Battle Harbor. And when we rounded the point and could see the whole shore of Mary's Harbor, I breathed freely again.

It was empty and the splash of our anchor in the smooth water broke a silence that held no more than the sadness of the kittiwakes.

In a small boat brought, as I remember, by Tom Cumby, we went ashore and divided into groups. George and one of

the young men went straight into the heart of the country, bound for the region of ponds and lakes which would, as they said, bar Nielsen from wandering inland. Others took a course that would lead them to the sea on the other side of the peninsula. Robbie and I decided to go overland to several bays east of Mary's Harbor on the chance that Niels had come out in the wrong bay.

The barren was warmer than it had been the day before when we had hunted, but it was vast and spongy. Everywhere there was a carpet of thick mosses into which our feet sank; walking in it was as hard as walking in the soft sand of a tropical beach. We penetrated patches of pines when we imagined we saw trails going into them. We climbed hills and surveyed the land, hoping to see a moving speck that would be Nielsen—this despite the fact that he was dressed in olive-colored oilskins which would have made him invisible at even a short distance.

And late in the afternoon, from a hilltop above one of the bays we had come to visit—Kyer Cove or Shoal Cove, I forget which—I fired a shot with my Mauser. Several times before we had done so, but this time, after an interval of several minutes, the sound of a shot came to us against the wind and from a direction in which the other search parties could hardly be. Robbie and I stared at each other.

"Fire again!" Robbie cried.

The reverberation echoed among the hills and died away. Tensely we waited.

And then came the answering shot.

"Fire two!" shouted Robbie. "Then we'll be sure."

I fired two shots and then, after a minute or two had gone

by, we heard two shots drifting up and obviously in answer to mine.

With a whoop we ran down the slope of the hill and, careful of the direction, plunged into the gloomy pines. We tore our clothes and we fell down and got out of breath, but our excitement carried us along and we covered a mile and a half in a short time. Then we stopped and, aiming at the earth so no stray bullet would cause damage, I fired again.

This time the answering shot was near at hand and, shouting, we ran toward it. As we ran, I thought what a fine thing it would be for us to find Niels rather than the Labrador-men. But side by side with this notion ran an undercurrent of ignoble regret: if Niels spent another night alone and lost on the barren before we rescued him, his attitude of passive condemnation of all I did as master of the schooner would no longer be possible. He was able to maintain it because of the gap between our ages and experiences and because, to date, all the mistakes were of my making. Having made so ludicrous a one as this, getting lost in an area ten miles long and four or five miles wide, his prestige and superiority in Robbie's eyes and mine would disappear.

Soon we heard crashes in the scrub ahead and we burst out in a patch of barren at the same time a man came out of the woods on the other side. But it was not Niels; it was George and he had mysteriously grown a short, dark goatee since morning, a feat which gave him a very distinguished appearance.

"Were you answering our shots?" we demanded.

"Yes, byes, that I were and damned if I didn't think I'd found the man!"

In utter disgust, we approached each other, weary from fast travel over difficult ground. We seated ourselves on a fallen log and discovered that George's goatee was a thick blob of tobacco drool.

"I don't like it, byes," he said. "I swung around from the ponds and come cross-country; that's how 'oo come to hear me to sou'east. But 'tis funny we ain't turn' up no sign o' he. This is not so great a place."

It was getting late and none of us had eaten since morning, so, as arranged, we made our way back to the log hut on the shores of Mary's Harbor. The others were trooping in from the barren when we arrived and like us they had seen not the slightest sign of Nielsen. We were silent and tired as we went aboard and the fishermen were mulling over something of which they did not care to speak. It was Tom Cumby who brought it out.

"Byes," he said, pausing with a mug of coffee in midair, "it's funny we ain't seen that man. Something must have happened." He looked around at us for a space. "That man might be dead," he finished abruptly.

"Ah," George cried. "Now 'oo said it! That he might. He might have been coming through that bush a-dragging his gun astern o' he and some little twig or something caught the trigger and shot he square in the back. It wouldn't be the first time."

They nodded solemn heads, and then all the way back to Battle Harbor we heard of men—and women—who had been lost in the Labrador wilderness. One case has stayed in my mind to this day. A girl connected, as I remember, with a mission school had got lost and, despite a lengthy hunt, she

was not found. Months later, hunters came on her body; it was in very good condition except that the face had been eaten off by black flies.

Taking the search party back to Battle Harbor was necessary, since we could not sleep them aboard and the worst feature of going back was facing the questions of the people and the chill suspicion of the magistrate, who was also the principal trader.

A second day with the same group was spent in searching the land east of Shoal Cove and in a cursory re-examination of the country around the barrier chain of ponds and swamps. It was a duplicate of the first day, replete with gun shots, prolonged halloos, and careful but ineffectual poking in the dense scrub. I began to feel badly. It was easy to hope Nielsen would stay lost long enough to take the arrogant austerity out of him, to humble him and rob him of the dry sarcasm with which he pricked my muddle-headed romanticism daily. But I did not like the idea of his being dead, and it had occurred and reoccurred since the fishermen had begun to tell of lost men, found in the springtime, sadly mutilated by foxes.

I thought of Nielsen, stiff and grim and deprived of his face by flies.

Today I realize our search was more notable for its energy than its system. But, even so, I doubt whether a much more scientific search, complete with posses, radio broadcasts, and planes, would have done any better. A man in that undergrowth was as invisible as an Indian in a dense jungle.

In Battle Harbor the arrival of the *Dolphin* from these all-day man hunts was the signal for the greater part of the

population to crowd the wharf for news and, looking up from the cockpit, we beheld rows of sea-booted feet, with rough woolen trousers and dark woolen jerseys above, topped by sou'westers over sea-reddened, toil-hardened faces from which kindly, concerned eyes looked forth. And among them there was always the magistrate, who listened to the report of the day's hunt with thin, noncommittal grunts, his face averted, his eyes never meeting ours.

After the fourth day our searches began to lack conviction. "I don't know, byes," Old Harry would say, "I don't know." They hunted hard and with willingness, but imperceptibly we had ceased to hunt for a lost man and came to expect the end of our efforts to be the discovery of a corpse. Robbie and I did our best to recall what we could of Nielsen's family from odd remarks he had dropped. His sister, living in a small Danish seaport, was the relative he had most frequently mentioned, but vaguely we thought his mother might be alive. Once we decided that his correspondence would tell us and then, remembering the weird appearance of Danish, what with its crossed o's and diaereses, we realized it would be of very little help and began to despair.

And every time we returned from a fruitless search, ancient Moses Bartlett, the customs collector, would berate us for having gone to Mary's Harbor, in the first instance, without having purchased some kind of license the nature of which I never entirely grasped. His insistence injected a note of madness into the affair which went well with the trader-magistrate's suspicions.

The seventh day since Nielsen disappeared was a Sunday and the entire crew of a big Newfoundland fishing schooner





piled into their motor boats and joined us. The nurses of the Grenfell Mission came; likewise some newly arrived mission dudes and a doctor. Our fishermen friends, still game, accompanied us as usual and in all we made a party of more than thirty people. And in that area of extensive barrens and high bare hilltops commanding wide views, more than thirty people searched, shouting and shooting, and at the end of the long northern day not a trace of Nielsen had been turned up and the considered opinion of every man and woman there was that he was dead some place in the undergrowth where months of search might not find him.



We followed the sea road back to Battle Harbor, our minds filled with this realization. Nielsen had dragged his gun through the underbrush and it had been discharged into his back by a treacherous twig. He had been drowned trying to ford the Trout River. He had broken a leg in one of the patches of dark pine and, helpless, he had perished miserably. One of these things must have happened, for it was now eight days since he had walked ashore and, eight days without food or shelter!—it was impossible that he had survived it. Nevertheless, Robbie and I decided to search until the tenth day for form's sake. Not one of the fishermen

thought we had murdered Niels, but appearance counted for a great deal, so, despite our conviction that it was useless, we continued.

We went to the opposite side of the peninsula and hunted what the Labrador people called the "landwash." We even went far up St. Lewis Sound and hunted inland from the bold shore. We did what we could and after the tenth day of Nielsen's disappearance we formally pronounced him dead. To make it official, we took the mattress off his bunk and converted it into a stowage space. It looked better that way; the sight of the empty bunk had been getting on our nerves.

But badly as we felt over Nielsen's loss (in our eyes, he now acquired virtues which would have qualified him as a culture-hero, had they been real), there was a matter more pressing: we were low on provisions and we had less than fifteen dollars' cash. I could have written to the States and obtained more, but that was entirely too logical; instead, I decided to sell the motor.

I went to the trader-magistrate and said to him: "Here, now, our companion is dead and we are going north and we——"

At this point he held up a thin, white hand. "No," he stated, in a cold, querulous voice, "you can't go down north; \* you got to stay. There's got to be an inquiry; I have my instructions from St. John's and you must both make depositions. There may have been foul play—I'm not saying there was—but it's possible, you see, and you have to stay while the case is being investigated."

\* In Labrador, north is down and south is up. I do not know why.

The faintest breath of a suspicion of this kind is a chilling thing, and being innocent does precisely nothing to bolster confidence. What confidence we had came not from our innocence but from the knowledge that, even if we had killed him, it would have been almost impossible to prove it.

"Then," I told the trader-magistrate, just as Robbie and I planned it, "you must either institute a search on your own account or examine us at once so that we can go on our way. You can't expect us to stay in the harbor at your disposal indefinitely."

"Well," he hesitated, "well, I'll get in touch with St. John's and see what they think."

"When?"

"Now. Today. You mustn't think we suspect anything, but . . . well, I guess you can see how it is."

I said that I could. "And now," I began, "what about buying our motor?"

The trader's face brightened. "Your motor! Why, yes, I'd like to buy it. Only it's not worth much, you know. I can't say how long it will be before I can move it if I take it. . . . How much do you want?"

"A hundred dollars."

"That's a lot; it's too much." And then we wrangled for fifteen minutes. But the trader knew it was just the type of motor the local fishermen used and he knew he could sell it, because some of them had spoken for it the moment they knew we were considering sale. In the end, he agreed to pay fifty dollars in goods and fifty dollars in cash. This was a slight retreat on my part, but I managed to get his assent to the payment of customs duties, if any.

The deal concluded, he promised to get immediate action on our status as murder suspects and, as I turned to leave, he smiled almost cordially. "You know," he said, "I'm sorry about your friend, but this has been fine publicity for Battle Harbor; I'm the local correspondent of a New York paper and I'm telling 'em everything that happens. I guess they must be publishin' every word I send 'em."

He was no doubt an excellent fellow and he seems to have been kind to his wife and children, but I could not get to like him much and the fishermen fairly loathed him, mainly because of his strict dealings.

We were examined separately and lengthy reports of our answers to questions, some of them quite sinister, were written down by the trader-magistrate in a slow, sprawling hand. We were asked if there had been any quarrels on board, how long we had known each other, if Nielsen had had any money with him, and other things pointing in the same direction. I do not wish to exaggerate this side of the affair; I am sure that after the first day or two not a fisherman who knew us thought we had murdered Nielsen and even the trader may have been confident that we were innocent, acting only on instructions from St. John's. Nevertheless, the questions asked were very pointed and the casual order not to leave was quite definite, although we had little intention of obeying. I can see, too, the trader's view; we were both of us suspicious characters, for we minded our own business and made no attempt to meet and have intercourse with people. We had arrived without letters signed with great names, our boat was a poor little thing, we were obviously not rich, we

fitted no standard pattern, and we made no effort to explain ourselves. Therefore we were suspicious characters. And our companion had disappeared.

We were made very uncomfortable by these suspicions, but the result was inevitable; a man had disappeared on the barrens and, since so long a time had elapsed, in those inhospitable wastes he must have died. His companions told similar stories, search had been exhaustive, and no sign of him had been disclosed. We were therefore given permission to proceed and, on the twelfth day after that snowy, blowy one on which we had lost our taciturn shipmate, we abandoned the search completely and prepared to haul out the engine.

And we rearranged our cruise. The potato-boat yacht had lost her most experienced sailor, the motor was sold, and sure as we were that Niels had died violently some time during his first day ashore we still tortured ourselves with the thought that perhaps we should hunt another ten days. But ten days' exposure and starvation he certainly could not have survived, and resolutely we went on with the remaking of our plans.

We came to terms with ourselves on this illusion of being astute business men, cruising the Labrador with dreams of commercial empire. To date our only business transaction had been the sale of the very necessary engine, mostly because we needed the money but partly because we could not make it run half the time; the latter drawback was the result of our own ignorance. Our next transaction might well be the sale of one of the masts or the whole boat, but vast hunt-

ing, trading, and prospecting operations were certainly not in us and we both confessed that neither one had taken that side of the project seriously.

Nevertheless, we continued to be faithful to the other part of the project: we were going to sail the length of the Labrador, clear to Hudson Strait. The question that now arises is why, since we owned up bravely to being without serious dollars-and-cents aims, but I am unable to supply an answer. I know only that the answer would be the answer to many other things. It would explain the enormous urge to have a little boat that dwells in many men. It would be the answer to why men go ocean racing, to why they spend money they need for clothes on coats of paint for fat little craft without beauty in any eyes but their own; it would be the answer to why, every year, a scattered fleet of small vessels steers south and out across the Pacific, manned by rapt dreamers in search of an island which cannot exist.

But, whatever it may be, this is certain: Robbie and I confessed with our mouths that, far from being on a rapacious commercial voyage, we were merely sightseeing; yachtsmen, in fact, although our craft was ever so unyacht-like.

Pulling out the engine and surrendering it was our final necessity, but we discovered that when Reuben nailed a boat together he nailed it securely, and in bolting the engine to its bed I am sure that he had never planned for it to be sold to a Labrador trader. It was hard work in a cramped space and, to the scandal of the Battle Harbor men, we were doing it on a Sunday. We were oily and greasy and short-tempered; we paid little attention when we heard the hollow boom of

a shotgun loaded with black powder. Another boom followed and there were voices raised ashore.

"Stick your head out, Robbie," I directed. "I can't see what's going on from here." "Here" was between flywheel and bulkhead, with my nose in the bilge water.

Robbie went out on deck and I could hear him talking with some people on the wharf. The talk was incomprehensible to me, for the words were blurred and muffled by being strained through the engine-room hatch. But one thing I did understand plainly and it brought me out on deck; one of the people on the wharf had shouted: "Why, they've got the man, that man who was lost!"

A long, open motor boat was entering the harbor and she was flying rag-tags of bunting from big oars; all her people were standing up, shouting, and one of the men was firing his shotgun as fast as he could load it. In their midst was an oilskinned figure seated on the engine box.

Nielsen was rejoining the *Dolphin*, after all.





## EXHIBITION MEETS EXHIBITION

**I**F THERE were any citizens of Battle Harbor who did not come down to the wharf that day they can only have been bedridden or too old to creep, for the structure groaned with the weight of them and the crowd buzzed like a disturbed hive. "They've got the man! They've got the man!"

Niels was helped out of the boat by scores of hands and dropped down on the *Dolphin's* deck.

His face was matted with a tangle of dirty yellow beard and he was so thin and his skin so wax-like that he looked dead. But he was alive enough to be embarrassed by the stir he was creating and at once he ducked below to seat himself in the farthest corner of the cabin.

"I'm not hungry," he said hurriedly. "Just give me a cup of coffee."

Behind him there poured into the cabin every single person who could possibly be jammed into it and those who could not thrust their heads through the hatch, while the schooner heeled this way and that as the mob on her deck moved from side to side, seeking a knothole from which the sensation could be viewed.

"We found him in Shoal Cove," the captain of the schooner to which the motor boat belonged kept saying. "Right on the shore, and that only a few miles from where he was lost. We were just going to catch a few trout in Mary's Harbor an' I says to my mate here: 'Look you here, now; we must have our eyes about us, for we may see some'at o' that man as was lost from the little yacht.' That's why we went into Shoal Cove in the first place; it was just to follow the shoreline and look.

"An' by an' by, we see somethin'—we weren't sure what, but we thought we see a man walkin'. An' he disappears. So we lands and follows alongshore. We find a place where some'un had tried to make a fire with sticks and rags, an' a little further on there was a bed made out o' bushes an' things. An' we come runnin' along, shoutin' an' hollerin' an', sudden, we come on the man; he was sittin' down thinkin'."

"No," Nielsen put in, "I wasn't thinking, I was resting."

"Well, you looked pretty thoughtful. An' we took him in our boat an' brought him here. All he ate was some biscuits we had with us. There was other things, but he said he wasn't hungry."

At this moment, the crowd was parted and a few people pulled out of the cabin to make way for a young doctor from the hospital. He looked the durable Dane over and said that, without any question whatsoever, he had to go to the hospital for feeding and rest, as lack of care could kill him now. Niels tried, as a final gesture, to climb the wharf under his own power, but he fell back and had to be lifted up. Then he was assisted to a cot in the hospital by an admiring and astonished throng, Robbie and I being scarcely permitted a hand on his arms.

He had been quite without food for twelve days.

Somehow we were gently ejected from the hospital by the nurses and, after standing about clumsily for a while, we returned to the *Dolphin*. In the uproar we had neglected to ask Niels where he had been and how he had managed to stay lost so long. The marvel of his having survived so many days' starvation had made us forget to, but once aboard the *Dolphin* this point occurred to us. "Why, confound it," said Robbie, wonderingly, "we didn't even ask where he has been!" For a moment we contemplated going back to the hospital for an explanation but decided against it as being ghoulish. Instead, we set to work restoring Nielsen's bunk to its original condition. Out came the coils of line, the suitcases, the fishing gear, the spare clothing—all the impedimenta we had dumped into it—and back went the mattress and blankets originally there. We felt quite glad we had not sold them.

After dinner we went to the hospital to ask Nielsen where he had kept himself for twelve days, but the nurses made us leave before we had heard much more than a gloomy asser-

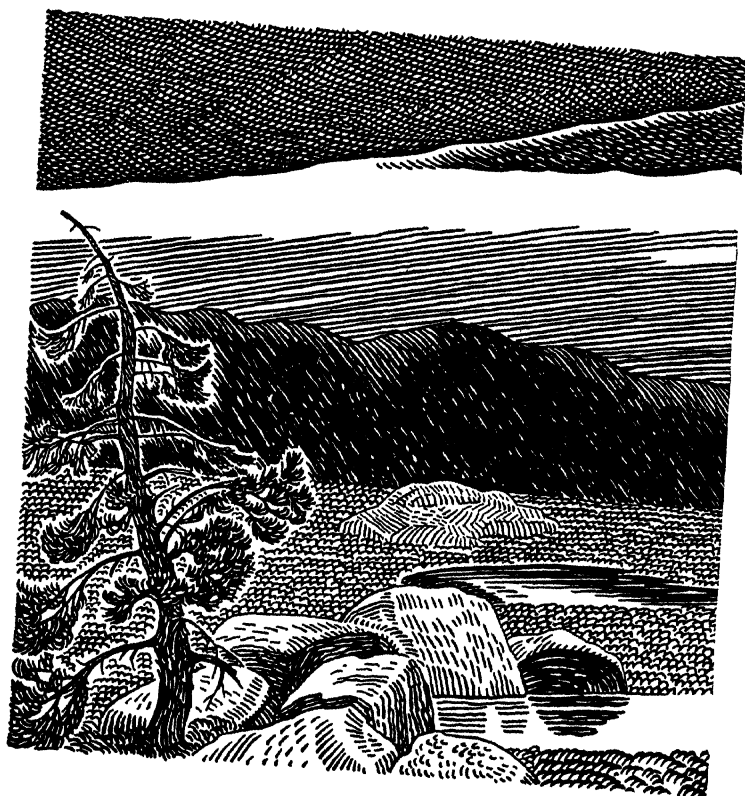
tion from Niels to the effect that: "no one could say the Danes wasn't tough people." Every day thereafter something of the same sort happened until the fourth day, when he was so recovered that he wanted to come aboard again.

Then and then only did he explain himself. He was in high spirits and interlarded his account with wry bits of self-abuse. Niels, apparently, had indulged in considerable soul-searching out on the barren.

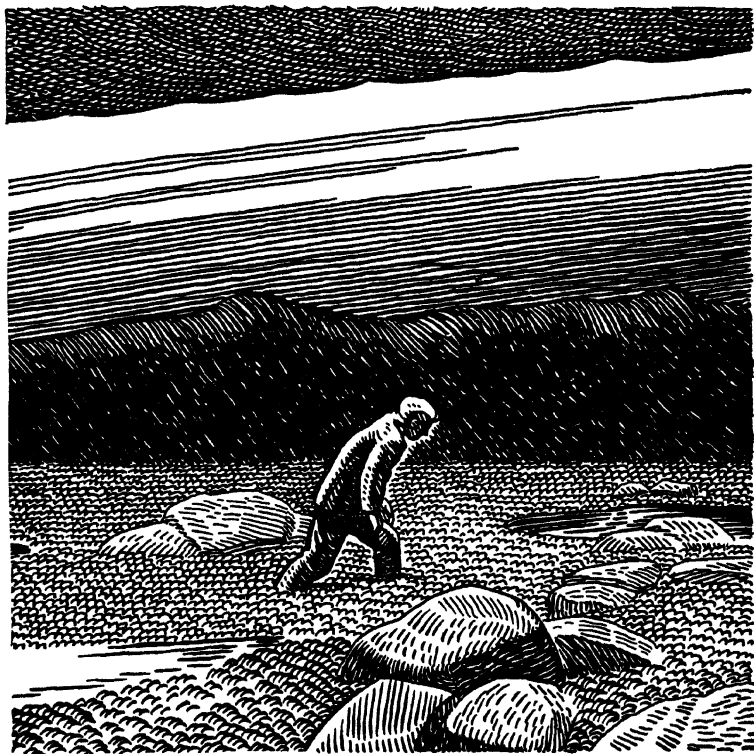
The story was, I believe, the standard one told by all who have been so unfortunate as to be lost in a wild country or, at any rate, it had features common to most such accounts. Niels had fished for trout a short distance up the river on the day he left us. Then he had walked inland, hoping to sight some game, as the trout were not biting very well. Somewhere on the desolate barren, the wind and snow had caught him and he had been at times literally blown from rock to rock. Instead of finding a lee somewhere and sitting down until the storm abated, he continued to travel blindly in hope of reaching the schooner. Daylight ended and he stumbled on.

Considered calmly, it is easy to see the mistake; there on the dark barren, with the wind moaning over the mosses and through the patches of scrub pine, the longing for human company and shelter from such an evil night made the fatal wandering an almost inevitable action. In any case, Nielsen did this disastrous thing and when morning came he was in the midst of a country of lakes and low hills with not a sign of the sea in any direction, and no recognizable landmarks to guide him.

The lakes were those lakes described by the fishermen as



a barrier which could not fail to hold him in the peninsula. What none of us had supposed, however, is that he would actually try to traverse the morass. But he did, and while we were shouting and combing the land for him, Niels was doggedly wading, wallowing, and swimming ever deeper into the maze of islands, bays, ponds, and lakes. As well as he could tell, he spent more than a week in the dismal labyrinth living on water and having nothing at all to eat. The first



night he lost his fishing tackle, and his shells he exhausted firing to attract our attention.

"I wasn't very hungry," he told us. "Not after the fourth day. And that water! Ah, it tasted like beer. But I kept getting weaker and I couldn't go far. And I couldn't sleep; just dream, that's all I could do."

Every night he had made a bed of boughs and pine needles, and on them he had collapsed to lie in a haunted stupor

until the short dark was gone and, in the ruddy morning twilight, he could look about him and try to find guiding marks in the everlasting sameness of hill, barren, and pine. Sometimes he heard our shots and failed to go toward them, cursed with a conviction, always, that over the next ridge would be Mary's Harbor and the *Dolphin*. By the time he had reached the "landwash" of St. Lewis Sound, the search was being conducted by a few scattered parties of us over on the ocean side of the peninsula.

He came out at Shoal Cove and here, for the first time, he lost heart and wondered if he was going to die. Not three-quarters of a mile away there was a motor boat, her crew hauling in a big net. And while he screamed and shouted, his weakness muffling his voice and his despair shaking his limbs, the fishermen, all unaware of the man on the shore, leisurely took their catch, reset the net, started their motor, and returned to Battle Harbor, a bare seven miles away. This was too much even for Niels and he made a pine-needle bed and flung himself on it.

Not until the next day did he recover his will to fight against the passive hostility of the land. He knew—and at last he was right—where he was. Mary's Harbor was to the westward but a short distance away and, hoping the *Dolphin* was still there, he patiently plodded along the shore in that direction. What he would have done had he reached the harbor and found it empty, I do not know, but, being Nielsen, I suspect that he would have plodded stubbornly back and tried to reach a point near Battle Harbor. Fortunately for him he was seen and picked up while making this final effort to reach Mary's Harbor.

Nevertheless, Battle Harbor found his rescue a very unsettling event, for the rescuers had been breaking the Sabbath and, contrary to all law and reason, good had come of their loose living.

But this adventure of Nielsen's did one thing: it ended the day of divided and unwilling authority on the *Dolphin*. While Niels was lost I had taken complete charge and Robbie and I had developed between us an agreeable working arrangement. Niels lost prestige by getting lost when he need not have been and, also, his confidence in himself ebbed. From here on, we pulled together, or it seemed to me that we did. I felt responsible and the other two were content to have it so. Not that I sat arrogantly, issuing across my hairless chin orders which might not be questioned by these older men; I did not. We planned and consulted and there was advice and discussion, but in the end my decision was final and I alone was responsible for it. I was master of the *Dolphin*, five tons, no guns, British-built, and bound for Hudson Strait and other places beyond the seas. Anything happening to her from this point forward must be laid at my door.

The first thing to be laid there, of course, is the sale of the engine. In a vessel whose sailing qualities were so unsensational as the *Dolphin's* a motor was a boon but at that time I was infected with a kind of wooden-ships-and-iron-men complex which made me rather proud of not being able to run it properly. Today I regard a small sailing craft without power as, at worst, something less than seaworthy and, at best, as a nuisance. Also I know a little about motors and am ashamed that this knowledge is not more extensive than it



is. But in ridding the *Dolphin* of her engine I gave myself exasperating airs of superiority and dwelt on the cheapness of wind as compared with the high price of gasoline. I said that it was noisy and smelly; why, I do not know, for we used it so seldom that it had no opportunity to be either.

And out came the engine. There was several days' delay in doing this, owing, first, to Nielsen's rescue and then to the arrival of a trim white yacht which anchored off the wharf where we were tied. She was a familiar sight there, having often entered the port, as I deduced from her skillful avoidance of the ledge on which we had bumped. The Stars and Stripes fluttered at her stern and at the foretruck was the emblem of the National Geographic Society. Her name was *Bowdoin*, her commander was Donald MacMillan, and she was bound on a voyage of discovery, for she intended to anchor at Etah, in North Greenland, and explore with planes the ocean west of Ellesmere Land in search of the peaks and capes Peary saw, or thought he saw, on his return from the Pole in 1906.

While we were in Chester, outfitting the *Dolphin*, we had read about the expedition, for there had been an enormous amount of publicity. For the first time in history, planes were to be used in the Arctic. International feelings even became ruffled; the Canadians, for reasons best known to themselves, laid claim to all the land, discovered or undiscovered, clear to the North Pole. MacMillan, on the other hand, was supposed to have been given the right to claim any new lands for the United States. We gazed at the beautiful *Bowdoin* and, made envious by her, we swore at the

engine as we dismantled its exhaust and other paraphernalia. Even Nielsen, back from the hospital and eager to be away from this place where everyone knew him and asked him the same questions about how he managed to survive, admitted that the *Bowdoin* was a splendid vessel.

We were hauling the engine out on the dock and arguing with the trader about the price of the goods he was giving us when a man dressed like a prosperous fisherman, which he obviously was not despite his bushy eyebrows and weather-beaten face, came up and looked at the *Dolphin* for a while.

"You've got a nice boat," he said at length, which was heart-warming, for mostly people said they would not go across the harbor in her. "I understand you're going to Chidley," he went on.

We said we were, Chidley being the northernmost tip of Labrador.

"Well," said the visitor, "she's a nice boat for the trip, but I'm hanged if I can see why you are selling your engine."

I considered telling him that engines had no place in a sailing craft, but there was that in the cut of his jib which made me wary; this man had a ship-wise look. So I contented myself with the formal explanation: gasoline was too expensive and none of us was a good engineer.

Nevertheless, he remained mystified. "You'll miss it," he prophesied.

I shrugged.

"Are you from the *Bowdoin*?" I asked, politely.

"Yes," he admitted as he left, "I'm from the *Bowdoin*."

His back was hardly turned before one of the fishermen

burst out laughing. " 'If he from the *Bowdoin*? 'If he from the *Bowdoin*? '! Why, damn 'oo, bye, he be skipper o' the *Bowdoin*. That man is Cap'n Mac!"

I felt very much embarrassed.

And that afternoon, while we were seated in the after cockpit, a man with sandy hair and excellent clothing was rowed in from the *Bowdoin*. He was striding up the wharf when the *Dolphin* caught his eye and around he swung with that reflex action of a small-boat enthusiast who sees a small boat. He looked down at us for a while and then asked whence we had come. We told him.

"Why, you must be fine navigators, to come so far in that little craft," he said, and he was quite admiring.

"Navigation!" Nielsen snorted rudely. "You don't need any navigation to come here from Nova Scotia; all you have to do is follow the shore; you can't get lost."

The man looked a little taken aback and then walked off. The first person I asked told me he was Gilbert Grosvenor, the head of the National Geographic Society. After that we tried to keep Niels in the cabin.

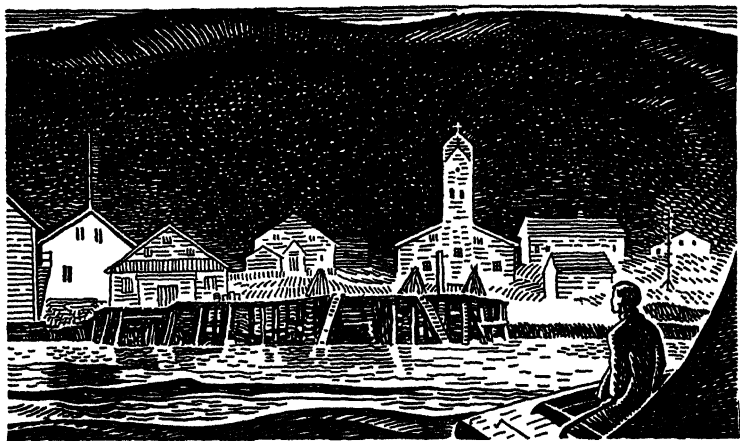
When another man who chatted pleasantly and wished us good luck turned out to be Sir Wilfred Grenfell, we realized that Battle Harbor was full of celebrities. The atmosphere of great men and vast enterprises increased when the converted trawler *Peary* anchored outside in the roadstead. She had MacMillan's planes—a couple of Loening "amphibians"—as well as a scientific staff and a group of naval aviators. One I noticed as being an especially handsome man and I was told that he was in charge of the flying unit; his name, they told me, was Dick Byrd.

Robbie and I stared at this expedition in open-mouthed astonishment. Planes, radios, ships, experience, experiment, and purpose—it was everything that our irresponsible raid was not, and vaguely it made us restless and dissatisfied. Perhaps, we thought, it would be better if we had some kind of purpose, some kind of plan.

We collected the trade goods from the trader and took our fifty dollars. We loaded water and provisions. Quietly, we bade our fishermen friends good-by. Despite the hue and cry Niels had raised, we were completely forgotten in the stir created by the “exhibition,” as the Labrador people, quite without malicious intent, called MacMillan’s effort. And on a quiet morning, blessed with a pleasant southerly wind, we sailed out of Battle Harbor and steered north through a sea laden with great icebergs. The Bowdoin and Peary had departed about two hours before us and now we saw them offshore, bound for Greenland and the polar pack.

They were even more impressive than they had been in the harbor and they upset Robbie and me; we had confessed ourselves purposeless but determined; now we watched this complex of men, money, talent, and ships, and wondered if we, too, ought not to make some discoveries. We got out Grenfell’s book on Labrador and read of the frigid northern fiords; we saw, in black and white, that certain of them had never been entered by white men and that many others were only partly known.

And we resolved to make discoveries. That the most necessary item for the exploration of the northern fiords had been sold to the trader in Battle Harbor did not occur to us.



## NORTHWARD HO!

OUR cruise now showed a pleasant tendency to uneventfulness. Summer weather had established itself and the southwest wind prevailed, driving us north along the coast with deceptive ease. Even with icebergs to windward, the cool breeze was good, for the sun was warm; we wondered why Labrador had no fashionable resorts. Nielsen ate astonishingly and Robbie and I could fairly see the fat being deposited beneath a skin which was bursting with new tissue. He would eat a meal, beginning well before us and finishing long after; then, a pipe in his mouth and a broad smile on his face, he would heave himself across the top of the former engine room and take the tiller, puffing and

grunting with the effort. In the end, he was heavier by many pounds than he was before he began his fast.

This southern part of the coast was not wildly interesting; from offshore it appeared almost as if some enormous plane had been passed over the hills once or twice, leaving them their essential hilliness but making them all of an even height. The enormous plane was the great ice sheet, that same mass which has strewn boulders all over our northern States. When close in on the land we saw how rounded and polished were the earth bones from the ages of ice-scouring, and often we noted black stripes of intrusive material in the yellow-pink rock of some of the outer islands. We did not, however, think much about such things.

My coastwise navigation began to improve and, as it did, my pleasure in it mounted. Almost as sudden understanding of an art-motive dawns, I found myself able to separate planes and visualize them as shown on the chart. I noticed how a faint mistiness made navigation easier, for it accentuated this essential separation; without it the coast looked a blank row of hills; with it the islands stood out, the bays and inlets defined themselves, and piloting by the chart became simple. Niels and Robbie were soon aware that I was grasping my subject; the first day out of Battle Harbor, we sailed through a bewildering archipelago and then put into what I maintained was Partridge Bay, since the maze ahead looked dangerous for night sailing.

My statement that the place where we put down our hook was Partridge Bay brought only long, stony looks from the non-navigators and when a motor boat from a Newfoundland fishing schooner came by, Robbie hailed her.

"What do you call this place?" he asked. My spine prickled and crawled, but I maintained a determined "navigator's face," this being a dead-pan complicated by god-like detachment and indifference.

"Oh, this is Partridge Bay," the fisherman replied. "It may have some other name on the chart, but Partridge Bay is what we calls it."

Robbie thanked him and I made no comment, owing to the sensations experienced as my spine went back to normal.

"Are 'oo an exhibition, byes?" one of the fishermen then asked.

"No. Just sailing and looking at the coast."

"Oh, aye; just sailing and looking. A little tourist boat. Well, that's what we do call, down here, exhibitions. Howsoever, we must pull our net; 'tis late."

Half an hour later, while we were eating supper, the thump of the fishermen's motor sounded alongside, and her wash rolled us at the same instant a pair of big cod hit the deck. "Have 'oo a fish!" a voice called. "Have 'oo a fish for supper."

This kind of thing happened to us often; these Newfoundlanders have very little of anything, but with what they do have—mostly fish and good will—they are marvelously generous. And, be it noted, the man in the motor boat said "fish"; had it been a salmon he would not have used the word. In Newfoundland and Labrador "fish" means "cod" and nothing else. In fact, a law prohibiting the catching of fish on Sunday cannot be made to prevent the taking of salmon, since a salmon is not regarded as a fish. It is very confusing.

The islands continued and with success we found our way

through them, whether the barren ones strewn off the coast or the green and black ones about Domino Run. Intent on making discoveries, we entered bays willy-nilly and found that they were calm and full of mosquitoes. We might have urged ourselves into them despite the slow sailing, only, as a rule, we found at their mouths the floating entrails of hundreds of cod, certain sign that the bay contained numerous schooners already in the fish. Then, too, the chart gave a disappointingly accurate idea of the bays we wished to explore.

Ultimately we decided to settle for a black bear in so far as the southern coast was concerned; we heard that some four weeks before a bear had been seen in Sandwich Bay, so there we hurried and anchored at Cartwright, a surprisingly civilized place and within a few miles of the point where the bear had been seen; by what process of reasoning we concluded the bear was also at anchor and awaiting our arrival, I do not know, but that was our attitude, nevertheless.

Nothing came of our hunting, amateur, clumsy, and without the steeling of stark necessity. The bear had not been anchored, and when a missionary rowed out and invited us to tea we were so embarrassed by the prospect that we fled to the inner fastnesses of Sandwich Bay, to the mouth of the Eagle River, and there, with a pointed stick, we prodded the earth for gold and, finding only shining flakes of mica, gave up and gathered firewood. The black flies, the mosquitoes, and the hot sun chased us out of that and during the night the mosquitoes became so dreadful that we were forced to flight, for, between tea with a missionary and hard bunks



shared with that high-whining throng, there was no choice; we hurried back to Cartwright, and Robbie and I, like men, submitted our persons to tea.

And instead of its being stiff and tame, a function to remind gauche young sailors of their hands and feet, it was pleasant and warming. If we had not gone to tea, never should we have known that Cartwright had been founded by one Colonel Cartwright in the late eighteenth century or that he had kept a diary, prodigiously minute, wherein he recorded his doings. He was a gigantic man and fierce, and the Indians and Irishmen under him were whipped and flogged at regular intervals. An American privateer during the Revolution, however, burned his buildings and ships and completely ruined him; they were annoyed because American fishermen had been denied access to the rich Labrador fishing.

We returned to the *Dolphin* in a borrowed canoe and we had with us a quantity of books, magazines, and smoked salmon, presents from the missionary. Half-way out, Robbie scratched his back or did some other rash thing and over we went, the cold water turning to green fire in our thrashings. I had been a Boy Scout not many months before this incident and my studies had taught me that move one in canoe capsizings was to keep your head. This injunction had been under a separate heading, as had been instructions for righting the craft. So I shouted to Robbie: "Keep your head! Keep your head!"

There was no answer.

"Do you hear me?" I demanded. "You must keep your head!"

"Well, what in bloody hell do you think I'm doing with it," he bellowed in sozzling exasperation, "boiling it?"

The instructions had said nothing about replies to this kind of thing, so I kept silent and tried to salvage the magazines and books; the salmon had floated away. Then we ranged alongside the canoe and towed it in to the shore. Robbie, to my surprise, swam quite well, which was rather devastating for me, as I had somehow gathered the impression that only Americans and Hawaiians knew how.

When we got aboard, Nielsen tried to make believe he was asleep, but, as we changed our wet things, shivering and swearing, we knew that he was watching our every move and laughing at us.

After a day or two more we sailed north, anchoring once because of tide and calm, crossed the mouth of Hamilton Inlet, passed through something called Cutthroat Tickle, and oozed between the bergs toward the islands outside of Hopedale; we got very tired of the monotony of this southern half of the Labrador coast. We had fog, though not a great deal; we had more calm than was pleasant; we had no strong winds.

From near Cape Makkovik, however, to the north side of Cape Mugford, so vast an archipelago lies along the coast that it is possible to enter it and then, for three hundred miles, to thread the runs and tickles, as the passages are termed, without more than barely glimpsing the open sea. This we elected to do, nor did we pause to consider that inside there would be little wind. Our first day gave us a splendid breeze and so there was no warning of the sirup-like sailing ahead of us.

It took us to Hopedale, that first breeze, and we were very much surprised about it, for the chart had now given up any pretense of exactitude and the endless islands all looked very much alike. However, we fell in with a fleet of fishermen and, enjoying their company, we followed them, only to have the leaders round up and anchor early in the afternoon. By this time we were so hopelessly deep in the archipelago that we, or rather I, did not know where we were going. So we sailed on and anchored beside the fishermen, only to find ourselves before a considerable town with husky sled dogs, a big church, and dozens of huts and boats all bursting with Eskimos.

And now we began to feel that we were really down north. There were the smells of sealskin boots, of dogs, of men and women who ate meat almost exclusively and did not bathe. There were the sounds of howling dogs and of a new, guttural tongue; there was the aurora; almost nightly since the Strait of Belle Isle we had seen it, but over the Eskimo village it had a more authentic or, better, more theatrical air. Hopedale was a village because the Moravian missionaries had there a church, a school, and a store. Around this nucleus was gathered a people essentially Eskimo but in many cases with the dilution of Scotch or English blood. The cross seemed an excellent one.

The missionary we did not visit, as we felt he must be rather a grand person and our yacht was very much what our yacht was. But the storekeeper we got to know, a little man who seemed eager to please but was prevented from doing so by an unvoiced indignation. When we bought things from him, he always gave us a receipt on which was written the

recommendation that complaints about goods be made before leaving the store; it was in both English and Eskimo. He said he was very tired of Hopedale and felt that there was no future in his line of work. But he had been born a Moravian and there was not much else for him to do.

We consoled him as well as we could.

While we were there a lovely old relic arrived, this being the ancient steam auxiliary bark *Harmony*. She was a beautiful thing despite her low yellow stack, and for decades she had served the Moravian Mission on the Labrador, having been purchased by them when she grew too archaic for the East India tea trade. Every spring she came to Newfoundland and in early summer went north to Hopedale, then Nain, Okkak, Hebron, Ramah, and finally Port Burwell, a settlement at Cape Chidley; all these stations belonged to the Moravian Mission. Today the trading posts and all the commercial work of the Mission has been sold to the harder-boiled Hudson's Bay Company. In 1931, a factor of that company told me there were a number of Eskimos at Cape Chidley who had debts of fifteen or twenty thousand dollars against their names in the Mission books, very astonishing sums to be owed by men who never see money of any sort. Returning to St. John's, the *Harmony* made a second round trip and that was North Labrador's final connection with the outside world, for the old bark then returned to England. Today she no longer exists, for the shipwreckers have destroyed her.

Niels and Robbie went to visit the *Harmony* and spent an afternoon hobnobbing with her sailors; I did not go, partly because I felt such things beneath my dignity as master, but

mostly because I wanted to revel in this chance solitude. When they returned they had with them two enormous tins of marmalade which they had somehow got from the sailors; after that I encouraged the visits whenever we met the *Harmony*.

A remarkably nice Eskimo lady made us some sealskin boots and when they were ready we drifted north with the faint, baffling airs of these inner islands. Often we caught cod for our table by dropping a lead fish over the side; this thing, which has on it two enormous hooks, is called a jig and, by jerking it periodically, big cod are hooked in almost any part of their body. Of cod we never tired; apparently it may be eaten three times a day for weeks and still be appetizing; trout and salmon grow tiresome in a very short time.

For a while we thought that we would never get north through the long runs and I remember our being becalmed off a lighthouse for hours while we listened to its keeper playing "Marching through Georgia" on an old accordion. If we made ten miles in twenty-four hours' sailing we congratulated ourselves and if it became fifteen miles we were overjoyed. Not once, though, did we say it was a shame we had sold the motor.

After a while we entered a broad bay between a high, wooded island and a still higher bluff on the mainland. Under the dark heights on the island there was a small nest of white buildings with red trim—a store, a dwelling, and a few shacks—and above them all floated what Robbie called the Red Duster; Niels, the Blood and Guts; and myself, the British flag, not having seen it often enough to be flippant.

But the flag bore on it the big white letters H.B.C., standing for Hudson's Bay Company, although the factors all solemnly affirm it means "Here Before Christ."

I had previously respected John Davis, navigator, for having invented the quadrant, from which our sextant is descended with only slight changes, and for having discovered such a very large and unpleasant body of water as Davis Strait. I now added to his excellent accomplishments the discovery of this fine bay, for it was named Davis Inlet in his honor, he having been the first white man to enter it. Today, were he to return, I hardly think he would be much surprised; beyond the little H.B.C. trading post, lost under the bluffs, it is unchanged. There was one white man there, a very attractive Newfoundland man named Keats who had with him only a few "servants," as the Company's laborers are called, these being of various degrees of white, Indian, and Eskimo blood. The combination makes a good Labrador dweller, for they were solidly constructed men, and Keats said that they were loyal, intelligent, and reliable.

It was strange to find Keats in this lonely place, for he was young, well educated, and very good-looking, but whatever it is that fascinates in the empty northlands, it had taken hold of him and he told us that he would consider living in no other place than Labrador. He liked the Indians who came out of the lake-dotted interior; he spoke their language, knew their manner of thought, and was a talented trader. Sometimes he came aboard and talked until far into the night of the wild Nascapi and Montagnais who came to his post and, from what he said, they must be the poorest

people in the world, very superstitious and dirty, and fiercely jealous of their women; why, I cannot imagine, for they are shockingly ugly.

Of the band out at this time we saw but little and we avoided the opportunity to see more. They had come out of the interior with their winter catch of fur and sold it for provisions, ammunition, and as much molasses as they possibly could get. From the molasses they made a disgusting muck containing a good percentage of alcohol and on it they had got themselves beastly drunk and were, at that time, somewhere up the inlet, staggering, shouting, and fighting. We saw several of them when they came aboard in their canoes to trade moccasins and small leather bags, all made of beautifully cured deerskin; how they do it, no one knows, not even Keats, although he is certain that urine and the brains of the deer are part of the recipe.

But, if the men who visited us were smelly, evil-tempered devils with drink-reddened eyes and surly dispositions, the young boys who accompanied them were splendid, possessing all the self-reliance, grace, and capacity for survival their elders had, with none of their wretched anti-social characteristics. Once having seen the Indians, it was plain why eternal hostility exists between them and the Eskimos, although bloodshed has been ended. The Eskimos are naturally gay, jolly, generous, and christian. The Indians are as naturally mean, sly, surly, and heathen.

On our last night there, Keats brought aboard a pint of rum and Robbie and I helped him drink it. Niels refused to assist, saying that alcohol stayed in the body three months and he had only two weeks to go before he would be virginal

once more in so far as liquor was concerned. It had a curious effect on us as we were not used to it; for a short time we felt animated and talkative, but then we grew sleepy and finally dozed off without ceremony.

Still inside the islands, we drifted north and saw how the chart was growing ever less exact, the trees thinner and fewer, and the land higher and not so ice-worn. At Nain there were already great bluffs afrown and it was, indeed, here that we crossed the tree line. The Eskimos at Nain were good people; I cannot imagine a more infectious laughter than the deep, rich chuckle of an amused Eskimo, and they are easily amused. We gained a fine friend here whom we called Charlie, although his name was something else and more difficult.

Charlie rowed out to us in a big, heavy boat, the very sight of him funny, for he held up his over-short khaki trousers with a pair of suspenders, worn and devoid of elasticity; they slipped down his shoulders with every stroke. Each time, he patiently hiked them up again. Charlie was a fat little Eskimo with enormously wise, humorous eyes and a fine assortment of weather wrinkles. He bumped alongside and looked up at us with a broad smile. "Good morning, boys," he greeted us. "Pleasure sailing or business?"

Taken back a trifle, we hesitated. "Just sailing," I finally replied.

"Just sailing! Well, she's a nice little boat, though that deck house is a little high. How many anchors have you got?"

We confessed to the fifty-pounder and a manila line one inch in diameter and sixteen fathoms long. There was also



a fifteen-pound graplin which had been left aboard by some mistake.

Charlie shook his head. "No lack of harbors on this coast, but you have to have good ground tackle. Now, have any of you ever been in Australia?"

He asked this as he came aboard and tied up, so there was time to hide our surprise and admit we had not.

"London, then; London. Surely some of you boys have been to London!"

Robbie and Niels had, so we took Charlie into the cabin and talked about London for a while. After that Charlie explained himself.

"I wanted to see the world," he told us simply. "So I shipped as a fireman on the *Harmony* and then, in London, I went as a fireman in steamers; I went all over the world, I s'pose. I saw its people and its places and when I finished with looking, I came back here. This is the best place."

We agreed, politely, that it was, but the picture of fat little Charlie in the inferno of the stoke hole of a great steel ship in the tropics was so astonishing that we were not very emphatic. Rather we asked how he had stood the heat.

"I just endured, boys," he said, gravely. "The other men stood it and I did not find it hard. But, after I had seen all of the world, I came back here."

"Why?" I asked.

Charlie wrinkled his brow. "It is home, I s'pose." (He always put in "I s'pose" with a sentence.) "And we Eskimos live well. We are clever people, but we don't have the things to work with. Why, there are men here in Nain who know

more about engines than the white men who make them. But we have no iron, scarcely any wood, no cloth, no tools; none of the stuff you need to do good work. When we get good stuff we do good work. Look at the fine sewing our girls do; no machine can sew like that; why, those seams in your new boots won't let in water and there's no grease in them to stop it, either. Wait till you come ashore and see how nice our sleds are and how good the ivory harpoons. It's as I say: we're clever people and we work well, but we haven't the stuff."

"Well, why do you stay here, then?" This from Niels.

Charlie gave him a slow look. "We like it, I s'pose," he replied, at length.

Charlie showed us the village and explained to us whatever small matters interested, but he grew bored with us; now I realize that he found Niels dull, Robbie unimaginative, and me gawky and naïve. To the mature and sensible man Charlie was, we must have been a singularly unstimulating boatload. Nevertheless, he was kind and attentive and made some effort not to show his superiority.

The *Harmony* was at Nain while we were there and there was also a strange rumor. Charlie told us to be very careful, for a steamer had just been crushed by the heavy ice; he did not know the name of the ship, but thought it was something about Eskimo. That would have indicated the Hudson's Bay Company's supply ship *Bay Eskimo*; still she was a modern steel ice breaker and it seemed hardly possible. Captain Jackson of the *Harmony* had not planned to go as far north as Chidley on this first trip; nevertheless, he said,

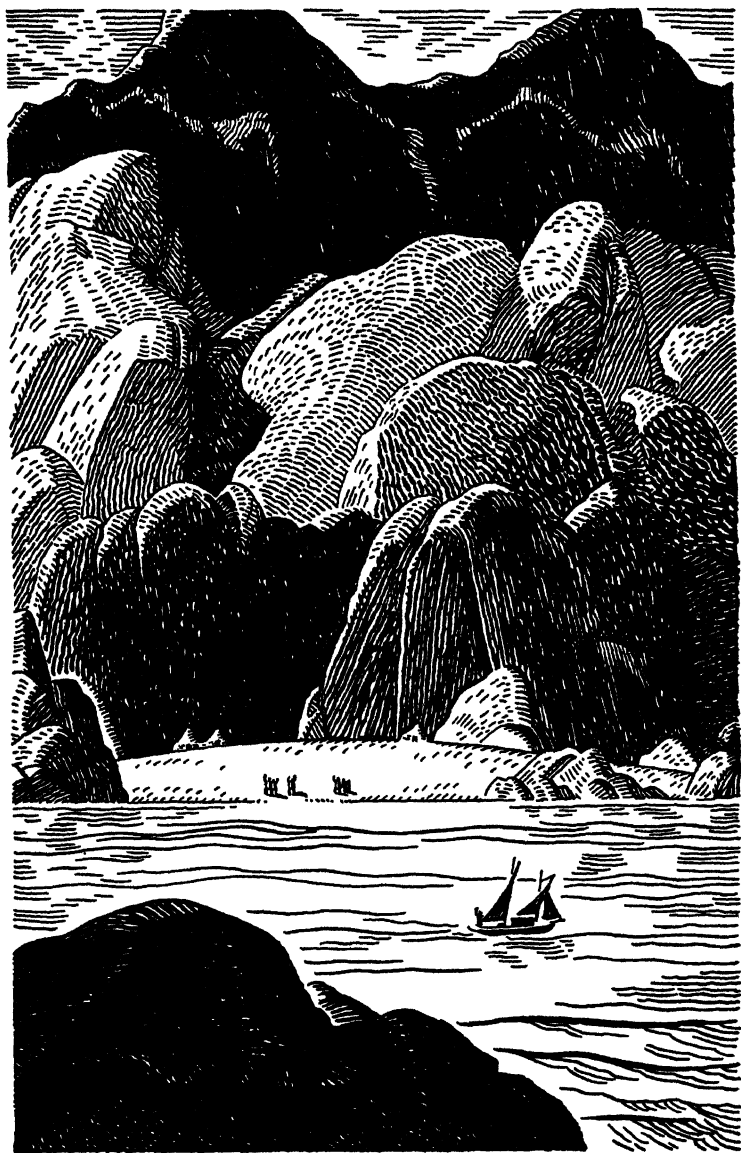
should he be able to verify the rumor, he would go there from Hebron and rescue the crew; the Eskimos claimed they were ashore at the settlement.

As we continued north from Nain, the land became mountainous and awful and in my mind there sat a thought put there by Charlie the Eskimo: our ground tackle was not good enough. The anchor was over-small and we had no substitute should it be lost. The cable was slight and it had been greatly used and misused. But northward our impossible little schooner was carrying us, inadequately equipped with every single item that makes for seaworthiness, and she was spared, even as are spared during the first acts those characters doomed to be eliminated in the last, in order that there shall be symmetry and justice to the play.

Great jumbles of naked rock heaved themselves up, snow glistening on their sides from the small glaciers which stayed and had identity throughout the summer. Nowhere was there to be seen a tree, and whenever we became accustomed to the crags and somber heights we found ourselves off a small *tubik*, the summer tent of some fishing Eskimo family. And these dots of white gave scale to the titan's devilry beyond and made us respectful of the little people waving before them; we wondered how they managed to laugh so much.

And by the way they stared as we tacked slowly past them I imagine we must have looked small, too; must have appeared a veritable request for annihilation.

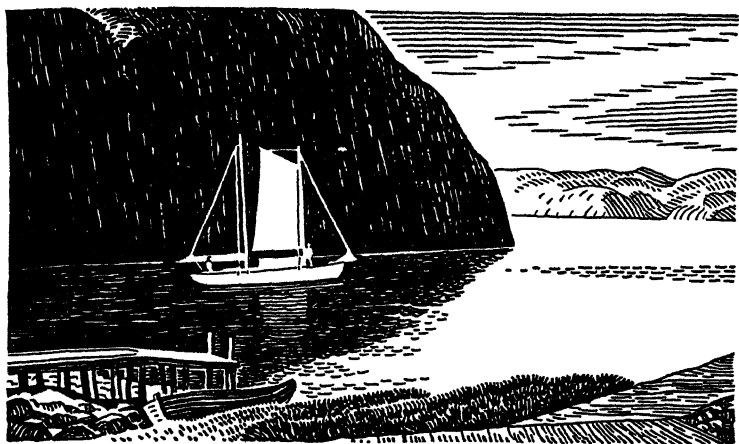
But, inviting it or no, we entered the sea again at a harbor called Port Manvers and, after a little coasting, buried ourselves in a froth of islands, seeking out a place called Okkak,



which was a station of the Moravian Mission. Once among them, the chart meant almost nothing, and as there was little wind we spent two days trying to find the place; when we did find it, it was by accident.

In Davis Inlet, Keats had said, casually, that the Eskimos in the Labrador were dying out and we had nodded without surprise; all our lives, it seemed, we had heard that this primitive group or that was in process of becoming extinct. Charlie, in Nain, had said something about the influenza epidemic in 1918 and the dreadful mortality among the people of the town; at the time we had not understood the hopeless resignation in his round, wise face; we knew only that in some way he was remote from us and humbling.

But at Okkak we saw that which made us understand: Charlie's had been the remote dignity of the condemned who remain calm.



## DEATH IN OKKAK—PERIL IN HUDSON STRAIT

THE aged white man who was the Mission storekeeper's assistant was sad and puzzled, given to quick speech and long descriptions of vast stores of gold in a fiord to the north which he knew to exist, although he was unable to say how. Later, some people told us he was insane, but there was no truth in that unless all are insane who talk lightly because they are intent on something horrible they have seen. He wore a mosquito veil and sealskin boots and woolen pants and the summer dickey, that red-trimmed cotton cassock of the Eskimo.

"Gold, my boys. Gold. Nachvak is full of it. But you need

an outfit. You need men and now . . . well, as you see, there are no men in Okkak." Always this came up in his conversations: no men in Okkak. Or something about the empty houses; when we first spoke of them he barely answered, but when he was rambling on about the gold, again and again, he would refer to the empty houses.

Okkak was deserted. There was an ancient Eskimo or two, waiting to die; there was an old white woman whose reason for being there I never discovered, although I rented a row-boat from her; and there were the storekeeper, his assistant, and a few hangers-on. But there were empty houses and dozens of stone rings for tents that had long ago been folded. The place was dead.

We went to the seaward side of the island on which the settlement stood, in search of driftwood for our stove; as I have said, we were north of the tree line. We found a quantity of it, bleak, white, sea-tortured, and we cut it into manageable lengths and returned to Okkak. The storekeeper's assistant must have been missing us because he spoke more easily and he had decided that gold was not so fascinating a topic after all; little by little, he nerved himself to talk of the empty houses, his eyes bewildered and dull.

"The *Harmony* brought it; that much is true," he affirmed. "No one has ever denied that the *Harmony* brought it. But that's no reason to blame the Mission! You understand that? It was not the Mission's fault. They were told not to go aboard. They had full instructions. But would they obey? Not they—they were rushing out as fast as they could and in a few days it started. I never thought anything could be like it. The people said that the end of the world had come

and some of us *kablunak* \* believed it too. Death. If you put your head into a house a dying daughter would tell you that her parents were dead and her little brothers were coming down with it. And there would be bodies to prove it.

"Dear God, we couldn't bury them; there weren't half a dozen able-bodied men in the village to lift a hand. Men I'd known well. Girls. Old ladies that made good boots. And the men and the women, they lay there dying and saying it was the end of the world. They called that thing Spanish influenza, but to me it was that the door to Hell was left ajar for a while and the smoke and stink of it got out to kill people. The dogs got into the houses and ate the bodies; they killed some of the people who were not dead, but too weak to drive them off.

"You've seen the mounds around the village; it was where the bodies were so many that we couldn't take care of them when help came from Nain; we just smashed the houses down on top of them and covered the wreckage with sod. That's all the grave most of them got. The ice came in for a while and some of the dead we just pushed under it and let them go to sea. And a couple of years later some of them came ashore again. The noses and ears and fingers had been eaten by the fish but otherwise they were all right; I could recognize every one.

"There were three hundred people in Okkak and every single grown man in it died in a few days' time. Yes, the *Harmony* brought the influenza but it's not the Mission's fault that the Eskimos disobeyed and went on board." He made that point again and again and, listening to him, you

\* White people.



knew that it had been the most moving thing he had ever experienced.

"Men I knew well!" he repeated. "And girls. They died as if lightning had struck them all."

And thus, on the Mission bark *Harmony* had come the pestilence generated on the battlefields, three thousand miles away, of a war that had less to do with the destinies of the Eskimo, on the face of it, than Polynesian morals have to do with double-entry bookkeeping. But, while the Christians were busily tearing each other limb from limb, with instruments of exquisite precision, the extension of the Kingdom had to go on in those few places where there were people who would hear. All the storekeeper's assistant said was true: the *Harmony* brought the plague and the Eskimos, disobeying, contracted it. And, had it not been the *Harmony*, it would probably have been a fishing ship or a trader; for the Eskimo, there was no escaping this monstrous expiation of the sins of others.

In Nain, which was once the largest Eskimo settlement in the world, three hundred people died in a week. Okkak was wiped out. Zoar disappeared. Hebron was reduced to a fraction of its former population, and Ramah was brought to the vanishing point. A kayak party carried the "breath of Hell" to Cape Chidley, but there the people were still hunting, traveling in small bands, and the damage was not nearly so great; it was the settled people, gathered around the mission stations, who died.

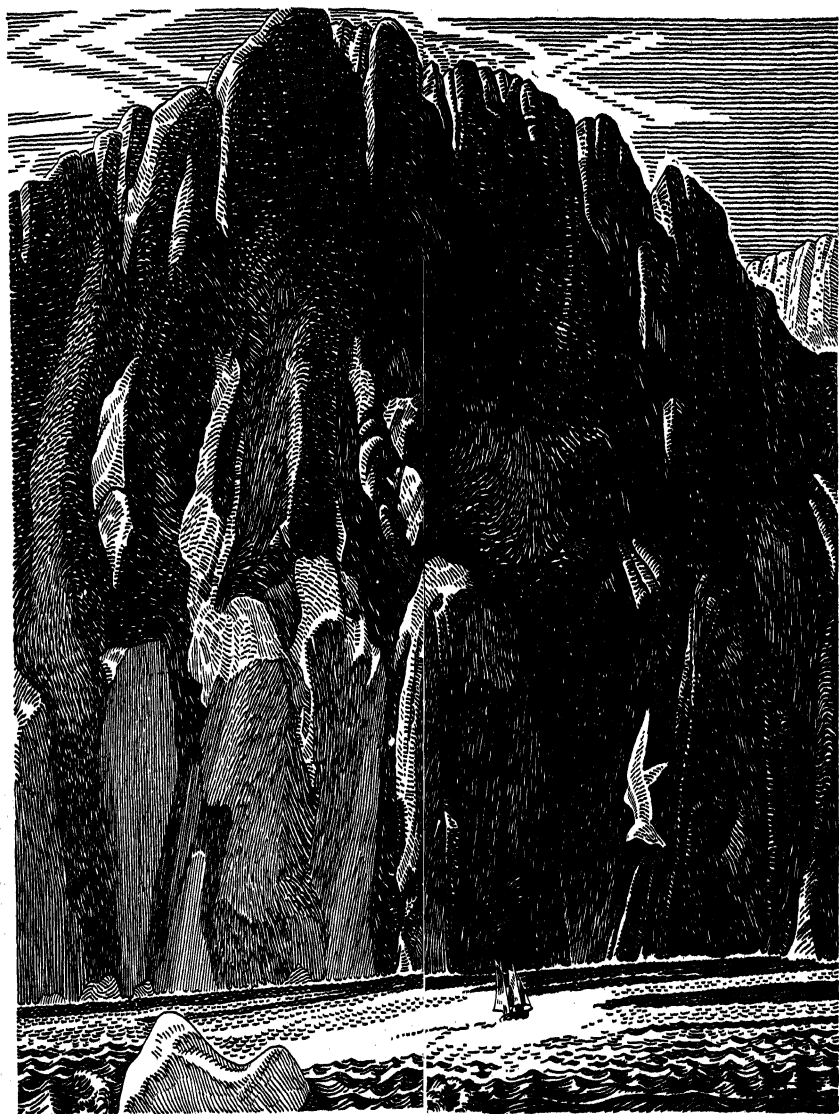
There is, they say, a point below which a species may not be reduced without losing its power of survival, and some observers believe the Labrador Eskimos have reached that

point and passed it. This may be and, at that time, I had no doubt but what it was true; however, I have been along the coast several times since this first ludicrous voyage and, while I have not counted noses, it has seemed to me that they were as numerous as ever; certainly the fat, black-eyed children were much in evidence, and if the Eskimos regard the reproduction of their kind with apathy they hide the attitude admirably. One hears much of the dying so-and-so's (write in any primitive group) and often it is true; but not a word is heard of the dying Caucasian and today no ethnic type stands in quite such peril of exterminating itself as stands this one.

As a tail piece to his story of sorrow and death, the storekeeper's assistant told us how two little Eskimo boys had fought with their father during Okkak's better days. They ran away from home and, thinking to frighten their parent, they hid in a boat drawn up on the beach and went to sleep. But in the darkness a giant polar bear wandered into the village and down to the boats. He sniffed of the two boys and they lay there too terrified to breathe. Presently the bear went away and the boys debated whether or not they should give in and return to the igloo. At last they decided against it and stayed. The bear returned and, reaching over the nearest boy, seized his companion and made off with him. It is not a very credible story, but the storekeeper's assistant maintained it was true and later, at Hebron, we heard it told again.

Okkak was getting on our nerves, so we left it.

The land just north of sađ, dead Okkak was what we needed and the cliffs of Cape Mugford made human tragedy small. From Mugford north to Chidley there stretches the



most spectacular piece of coastline on the Atlantic side of the Americas. Here is a Norway, but a grimmer, more desolate Norway, without vegetation and almost without life. At Mugford the Kaumaujets—the Shining Mountains—stand in vast red blocks which rise straight from the cold sea and its myriad icebergs in nearly three thousand feet of sheer cliff; inland they stretch, broken and tumbled, as far as may be seen. The *Dolphin* had a fast, fair wind and we stood into a narrow channel between Cape Mugford Island and the mainland. To starboard, the island was tall and impressive, but to port there towered over our heads close to three thousand feet of rock wall, so high, so close, it seemed to be toppling over on us. Waterfalls tumbled down the red sides, violent squalls snatched at our spars, a gull so high that he was barely visible was yet so low in relation to the stupendous cliff, that he was a creature of the water surface.

“God, it’s *terrible*, isn’t it!” Robbie shouted hoarsely, his blue eyes rolling like a Negro’s. And Niels, who never admitted anything was anything save insignificant, said it was a big mountain, all right, and added that even in Norway he had never seen the like.

And this awful channel, which should have had a name with such a roll of thunder as *Götterdämmerung* has in it, was called Mugford Tickle.

We drew away at last, crushed and unwilling to speak. Behind us lay the whole Kaumaujet Range and ahead the road to Chidley, to the ultimate Labrador we had promised ourselves. The discovery business looked as if it might pick up, for the chart was now liberally decorated with dotted

lines and toward the north there were whole fiords never entered and awaiting the *Dolphin's* keel.

It was, in any case, in these terms that we talked of the discoveries we intended to make and, to hear Robbie and me, you would have thought that Peary, Shackleton, Leif Ericson, and Sir Henry Hudson were down in the cabin having a gam together. Nielsen rarely joined; he was now normal and completely recovered from the rotten experience he had had; but he went along as one who endures rather than as one who co-operates heartily in the commission of a series of idiocies bound to bring disaster. Aboard, nonetheless, there was order and routine.

The sea was emptier of icebergs than it had been at any time since the Strait of Belle Isle. Sometimes we had been able to count sixty and seventy giants at one time; now there were a bare dozen on the solemn sea. Winds were not strong, and from the east a long, high swell rolled in, breaking and booming on the iron-bound shores. Great mountains heaved themselves up, truly Alpine in character, and we were alone with them; not a vessel, not a *tubik*, did we see; never did smoke arise to say that human creatures lived among the fairy-tale peaks, ogre-harboring, and the *Dolphin* was so small and solitary that I marvel we stood her. But we made three meals every day (all more or less alike), we caught fish, we slept, and we stood our watches. Once we were becalmed off the Four Peaks, the highest coastal mass between Baffin Land and the Strait of Magellan; they were dark and purplish, and patches of snow clung to them; the silence was of such a quality that it deafened, even as certain sensations of

cold are so violent that they simulate in character and feeling a burn.

It was my watch during this calm, and just after four in the morning. By the steely light I observed the angles between certain of the peaks, searching for a sign that we were being carried inshore. And the loneliness, the aloof chill of the jagged peaks and gray sea, was so great that once I nearly called the others to demand that they help bear it. When the impulse was nearly irresistible, however, a breeze sprang up and the schooner, that unfit-for-sea, half-equipped, wholly botched version of a yacht, moved forward again carrying us still further into the north and the lands where we were to be discoverers and explorers, since trading and prospecting were no go.

Once I saw deep into a secret and icy fiord and the notion of living in it, between the somber rock and cold, green water, came to me; periodically it recurs even today; there must have been some dark enchantment, in the sterile magnificence of the place.

During that day we got ourselves up to Eclipse Harbor and the wind left us and on an oily swell we lay helpless while vagrant currents drifted us onto spouting ledges and, when escape seemed impossible, drifted us off only to carry us toward yet another. It was still and in the air there rang a hundred miles of pounding sound as the swell rose and broke, thundering, on the grim coast. When my watch came again, we were still among the islands of a thin archipelago and a gentle wind was in the northeast coming from a gloomy red sunrise which told of wind. Niels pointed out several low

hummocks of ice, said the breeze smelled foggy, and went below.

It was painfully cold and raw.

One of the ice hummocks, slowly whirling, now drifted toward our course and I let the schooner off a little, so that in the end the hummock passed between us and the red glare. For a moment it stood silhouetted and at once I noticed the long, pointed object on one end. Abruptly the "pointed object" moved and then the bulk behind it lifted, and across the hummock prowled a polar bear.

I shouted and bellowed for guns and help and protection and witnesses, and Niels and Robbie, in their underwear, piled on deck.

"There's a polar bear!" I cried. "There on the ice! You watch! You'll see him!"

"I see him!" Niels whooped, unphlegmatic for once. "There he goes—quick, Robbie, shoot the son of—oh, hell, he's down behind the edge now."

And around the hummock we sailed for an hour, trying to get a shot, but the bear must have been alarmed by our bawling and taken to the water. We never saw him again and soon a sullen fog clamped down, with the wind rising and colder. Robbie and Niels returned to their bunks and I brought the *Dolphin* around to the port tack so as to clear the islands and get an offing that would permit our weathering Cape Chidley and entering Hudson Strait; the cape, the end of Labrador, was now but sixteen or seventeen miles away.

The wind piped up to a good strength and the sea com-

menced to break a little. The fog grew as chill and thick as wet feathers; the sensation of cold was as strong as ever I have felt it; the clammy fingers of the fog seemed to insinuate themselves into the fastenings of our garments and touch our goose-pimpled flesh, for, as we discovered, it was coming straight off the endless miles of ice pack not far beyond the horizon; the pack it was that kept the sea small despite the weight of wind.

At the end of my watch, we made breakfast and came about in quest of Hudson Strait. Not long were we on the new tack before we heard a roar of breakers ahead and, suddenly, out of the ghostly fog a long line of boiling white water appeared, the heavy swell breaking, it seemed, on a sunken ledge not a hundred yards away. Swiftly we came about once more and started to sail away, but, inexorably, the white fangs grew closer.

"The tide!" Niels cried. "The tide has us and we're going up." Somewhere off the entrance to Hudson Strait, in a thick fog, the unpowered thirty-foot schooner *Dolphin*, without a small boat, was going to pile up on a sunken and uncharted ledge. The tides of Ungava Bay and Hudson Strait, we knew, were among the worst in the world, equal to Fundy's, but we were not prepared for what now happened. Rapidly the line of breakers bore down on us, even though we were sailing away from them, and just when our hearts got jammed in our throats, I recognized it for what it was: a gigantic tidal overfall. Swiftly it overtook us; we turned our stern to it and it passed over us, leaving us wet and shuddering and scared. I ran below to the chart; the devil could take Hudson Strait in this fog. The swift tide might carry us through before we



expected it and, when the fog lifted, we could be far out in Ungava Bay but still thinking we were in the Atlantic; we would become as hopelessly lost as ever we were on the coast of Nova Scotia and here there would be no friendly fishermen to set us aright. I laid off a course designed to take us back to the coast and we sailed it for hours before the first islands showed, shadowy and unreal in the grayness.

There was no recognizing them and, as we sailed among them, the sea smoothed and we had narrow escapes from running ashore as the dim shapes loomed up ahead. This went on for an hour and then we entered a narrow passage and, on one side, saw what looked like a harbor; with two men on the sheets and one on the tiller, we jockeyed the schooner into this haven, a sliver of a place, and anchored with bare swinging room off the shore.

"And now where the hell are we?" Nielsen demanded sardonically.

"We'll find out," I told him. "How far did you go in your watch?"

He thought awhile and said about fifteen miles. Robbie gave his estimate and I added mine, dividing the distances, as guessed, among courses which had been altered at guessed times. We had no clock on board and changed courses and watches solely by guesswork. With these "data" I entered Bowditch's traverse tables and worked out our position by account. On the resulting position I planted a tiny cross without allowing Niels and Robbie to perceive it; I did not trust this answer. Then, graphically, I worked the thing out on the chart and got the same result. I went on deck and watched the water just beyond the harbor; it was flowing

westward, fast and strong. Once again I studied the chart.

"We are anchored on the north side of the entrance to McClellan Strait," I announced positively. And I was sure of it too.

Cape Chidley was the end of an island, and between the big island and the mainland of Labrador there ran this narrow McClellan Strait. In it, we had read, the tide ran at ten knots and we had heard how the old bark *Harmony*, in her only passage through, had been whirled completely out of control and shot sidewise, through water like soapsuds, into Ungava Bay, an extra handful of gray hair in her master's head and in his heart a resolution never to do it again. Our primitive dead reckoning put us at the entrance and the fast-flowing water checked, so I called the east entry to McClellan Strait our official position and a day later, when the fog lifted, it was seen that I was right.

It had been our firm intention to shun that hellish place, but now, watching the tide from our deck, it was too difficult to resist and on the third morning, with a strong, fair wind, we took the beginning of the west-bound tide and, wing and wing, committed ourselves to whatever the tide-cursed strait might hold for us. It was fourteen miles to Port Burwell, the Mission station.

Wind and tide hurried us onward and for a time we congratulated ourselves on our speed and comfort and wondered if accounts had not been over-dramatized. But the water commenced to boil and when she struck these smooth whirlpools, slightly raised above the rest of the water surface, the *Dolphin* shuddered and tugged at her helm. Before long

the water was boiling and only the leverage of our winged-out sails kept us under control; had we been a power boat, we would have been tossed about like a chip. Steadily our headlong pace increased, steadily the water grew in frenzy, and as it did the schooner became less manageable. Just as it seemed that she could no longer be controlled, the fierce tidal jet shot us out into Ungava Bay. We were through.

To the south was Cape William Smith (whoever he was) and to the northwest was an entry we believed to give into Port Burwell. Due west were the broad waters of Ungava Bay and on the horizon there was iceblink, telling of the massed pack beneath.

Port Burwell settlement was not immediately visible and, since the chart was a trifle vague as to location, we sailed slowly along shore until we spied two Eskimo boys fishing from a little boat. They wore infectious grins as we luffed up alongside them.

"Where's Port Burwell?" I called.

Their grins, if possible, grew wider.

"Ah chook!" they responded in unison.

That much we understood. This small, snug phrase means "I don't know," or "I don't understand," and an Eskimo uses it many times in each day of his life.

"Innuit?" I tried. "Innuit?" I gestured inshore as I used the word by which the Eskimos call themselves.

The boys waved at an entrance barely half a mile away and we let the schooner off for it. Shortly, to port, there appeared a dark defile and on one side of it there was a group of buildings, by their architecture proclaimed to be the Moravian

Mission station. A steamer's lifeboat was moored near by and beside it we rounded up and dropped our anchor, that inadequate anchor Charlie had said was too small.

At first we noticed a man or two about the buildings, but now, as we made up our sails, swarms of people issued from the biggest house and stood staring—more than thirty of them—and, though we were sure it could not be, we would have sworn they were white men. As we proceeded with making up the sails, some of them must have noted that we were without a small boat, for a group launched a big dinghy and presently drew alongside.

And they were white men.

They stared up at us, a frantic anticipation on their faces, as if we were bringing vast stores of food and they were starving. Only one face lacked that quality and that was the face of a giant of a man at least six feet four inches tall and very broad and strongly made.

The man in the bow, who threw us his painter, could not contain himself until the whole lot had jumped aboard.

"Who are you?" he demanded excitedly. "Where d'ye hail from?"

"We're the schooner *Dolphin*, out of Chester, Nova Scotia," I told him. "We're bound for—we're going a bit farther north. Who are you?"

"We're the shipwrecked crew of the S.S. *Bay Eskimo*! Did our captain send you?"

They crowded into the smoky cabin and stuffed it fuller than seemed possible; the big man had not even sitting head-room and we wondered how he was to be got out when, at last, they had to leave.

"I'm Corporal Nicholls of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police," he announced whimsically, although, of course, he told the truth. In amazement I almost asked where his red coat was, for the movies had led me to expect both uniform and a ravishing heroine. But there he sat in a dun-colored sweater, his hair having that look of profound discouragement hair always has when it is cut by its owner and, instead of a platinum blonde, helpless and desirable, he had swarms of shipwrecked sailors on his hands.

"She sank on us," they said. "The ice took 'er and squeezed 'er until she were like a h'old h'accordion and down she went. 'Ad 'er built for the ice, too, they did."

The facts were these: a couple of weeks before, the Hudson's Bay Company supply ship *Bay Eskimo*, a steel steamer of some three or four thousand tons, fitted to navigate the ice, had been nipped in the pack about a hundred miles southeast of Port Burwell, in Ungava Bay. She had been crushed, but held long enough by the ice to establish the entire ship's company, with supplies, on a solid pan. It had also been possible to contact the sister ship, *Nascopie*, by radio, and were it not for the radio the Arctic would have seen yet another ghastly tragedy, for escape from the drifting ice would have been doubtful, and in the party there were two women, wives of missionaries.

The crushed ice breaker slowly filled as the pack relaxed its grip and some twenty-four hours after she had been beset, the ice freed her and let her sink, as a boxer, knocked out but still in a clinch, might drop to the canvas when his opponent stepped back. The party on the ice was well provided and, to borrow from Mr. Evelyn Waugh, everyone was perfectly

splendid, as usual. The smoke of the *Nascopie*, fighting her way toward them, appeared after a night or two on the ice and ultimately she won her duel with the pack, took the shipwrecked party off, and carried them to Port Burwell. The master of the *Bay Eskimo*, with the passengers, immediately set out for Hebron and Nain in a motor boat, with the hope of intercepting the Mission bark *Harmony* and inducing her to take his people away from Cape Chidley.

"And 'ere we are in this freezing 'ole," a stoker complained, "without no assurances o' rescue and we thought, when we seen yer comin', that you 'ad news for us."

But all we could do was tell them when we had last seen the *Harmony*, describe her plans as we knew them, and report that, so far as we knew, her captain planned to come to Port Burwell if the rumor of the wreck was confirmed; if she was going to arrive at all, she would arrive within a week.

We heard from each of the many men in the cabin what had happened, we gathered that the "Mountie" was enjoying the diversion, but would nevertheless be glad when the shipwrecked men were safe and he could return to the even tenor of a life he loved. And in every one of them there was the fear that now, in late summer, the ice just to the east would close in on the coast and make it impossible for a ship to reach them. If that happened, their plight would be desperate, for in the whole settlement there was not enough to support a third of that crew during one entire winter.


They went ashore still uneasy and disappointed in us, for they had thought we were messengers with news for them and instead we were an unaccountable little boat whose arrival no one could have predicted and whose purpose was

inscrutable. In addition, the arrival of so small and poor a craft was like a blow in the face, for, only a few weeks before, their modern steel ice breaker had been destroyed and now this thing came, haphazard and casual; it made it seem as though a curse were on them.

"Well," said Niels, when they had gone ashore, "can you beat that? They got a big steel ice breaker and she gets lost on them. And here we are on the *Dolphin*. Nobody can say we ain't sailors."

Robbie and I agreed heartily and congratulated ourselves on our splendid ability.

And thus, in the unpainted cabin of this schooner, this converted potato-lugger, did we three fatuous asses bray that the luck which is God's mercy to fools was nothing more nor less than our sterling seamanship.





## SIR THOMAS BUTTON HIS ISLANDS

EVERY day they were in Port Burwell some of the men of the *Bay Eskimo* had walked inland to an eminence from which they could see Hudson Strait and there they spent hours watching for the *Harmony*. Always they returned downcast and fearful, thinking that perhaps a dreadful winter in that far, barren place awaited them. They were, for the most part, sleeping on the floor of the church, and they were bored and worried and quarrelsome, as any men would be in their boots. But grumbling was always a half-humorous complaint against the wickedness of the ice that destroyed their ship, against the hardness of the floor on which they slept, and against the diet which would confront them should



they be forced to spend the winter in Port Burwell. Not once did they damn the ship's owner for dispatching them to treacherous northern seas and of their captain they spoke with the deepest affection, alternating between "the Old Man" and "the bloody old bugger" as terms of respect; incongruous though these phrases look in print, when you listened to the fashion in which they made mention of him, you realized that "bloody old bugger" can be charged with more respect and reverence than "Your Excellency" and such-like nothings.

Not an Eskimo in the place spoke English and they lived the hunting life, depending only on the post and Mission for firearms and matches and molasses and flour, for which they gave furs. The trade could have been erased overnight and these bands would have gone on with their life, scarcely feeling the lack. They were larger and stronger, it seemed to me, than the Mission Eskimos to the south, although they were the same people—kind, polite, and effervescent, always just done with laughing at some small thing and about to burst into deep chuckles at another. They never laughed at us when we visited their tubiks, but they pointed out to us many things that were funny and when we too had seen that they were their mirth was glorious.

One tubik I remember vividly. It was a low, cotton cone not more than five feet high, but nearly fifteen feet in diameter. The head of the family that lived in it saw Robbie and Niels and me passing and invited us in with heart-warming hospitality. Crouched inside, our host introduced his family with gestures and kind, incomprehensible words. They were sprawled all over the sod and rock of the earth

on which the tubik stood. There were children, and adolescents, and grown men and women, and an old man. To one side there was an old woman, her face wrinkled and leathery and her hair gone gray; she moaned from time to time; her eyes had brightened at our entrance and then dulled again with her sickness. Her feet pressed against the blood-spattered body of a newly killed seal. She was covered with skins, but they had fallen aside, partly, and left her naked body bare to the waist; I was astonished to see how white it was where it had never been exposed to the weather.

No one paid any attention to her and she asked for none. She was dying of sheer old age and anxious to have done with it; her relatives apparently felt much the same, for they politely stood aside and let her die. At the time, this seemed monstrous to me and I insisted on trying to do something; something being to feel her forehead and her pulse. The attention, I think, embarrassed everyone slightly and after a while we left. That night I spoke to Corporal Nicholls and heard that the old lady had just died. "It's queer," he said; "when some of these Eskimos decide to die, they die and you can't stop them. That old woman felt she was too old to live and just went and died; she wasn't sick."

According to him, the Eskimos fear death more than any other people in the world and, to illustrate the point, he told us of an experience of his predecessor in the November of the year before. This man, with a Moravian, went to the Button Islands in a motor boat, the tide race between Chidley and the Buttons being so strong that ice does not often form in it; it was their plan to hunt the polar bear that frequent the group. They got no bear and, while returning,

a heavy easterly wind sprang up and drove lustily against the east-bound tide. The tide in that channel is of a six-knot strength and the high, breaking sea was a terrible thing. At last, in a heavy snowstorm, their boat swamped, they managed to reach Cape Chidley, and the missionary decided to go overland through the deep snow drifts in hope of reaching the settlement where sleds could be got; the trooper dug into the snow. Days later a search party found the trooper badly frozen but still alive, and so fearful of death are the Eskimos that not one of them would help put the half-dead man in the boat, simply because he had been and was so close to the awful mystery. As for the missionary, he was found two weeks later, not far from the settlement; he was seated in the snow, frozen solid; his hands covered his face as if he had tried to shield it from the merciless blast.

The day after we arrived, the men who watched for the *Harmony* came running into the settlement, whooping and laughing, to announce that the bark was working her way through the straits under power and would arrive within an hour. There was tremendous excitement and bags were being packed and anxiety was gone; already Port Burwell, with its bare rocks, its thirty-foot tide, and its sunlessness, was unreal and vague compared with the warm world to the south where, at this very time, crops were ripening, people were splashing in the sparkling ocean, and you could walk around naked in sheltered spots.

The *Harmony* anchored in the outer harbor and once more Robbie and Niels paid their usual visit and, as ever, returned with the big tins of jam, and a bag of coal, for our wood was low. The jam was a present, but the coal we pur-

chased and it was a rare privilege in this cold, foggy world. For the first time, the *Harmony's* people said they thought we had got ourselves so far north that we would never get south again.

And now a curious thing happened; up until the moment when the lookouts reported the *Harmony*, these men had been worried and anxious lest some slip force them to spend an ill- or non-nourished winter on a dead Arctic\* foreland. They had wondered if their captain had reached a settlement safely. They wondered if the *Nascopie* would surely pick them up in the event that the *Harmony* was unavailable; they wondered the whole host of things men wonder in a distant place without communication. But here was the *Harmony* and they went aboard her and returned seething with indignation and threatening to refuse to be rescued by her.

It seems that, the *Harmony's* every bunk and cabin being full, an abiding place had been made for them in the hold of the old hulk and this they deemed beneath them. They demanded that another ship be sent with separate bunks for all hands and they put on the face of the master of the *Harmony*, who had not been destined for Port Burwell at all that voyage, a look of concentrated bitterness and scorn.

On the morning of that queer threat of mutiny, I took a shotgun and walked into the interior of the island opposite Mission Cove, where we were anchored. It was a dank, gloomy land, with patches of snow that had not melted; a

\* Some may object to my using the word "Arctic" in connection with a place not within the Arctic Circle. It is listed, however, in the *Arctic Pilot* and it is north of the tree line, and this latter point, with its attendant climatic features, is the real determinant of the Arctic environment.

dark gray mist was in the air. I saw nothing to shoot, but for an hour or more I wandered and then, coming to the end of the island, I turned and began to walk back. My face was now against the wet easterly wind and I was astonished at the bite of it. The sky was low and darkly ashen; I was surprised, but not much, when it began to snow. The snow was pelted against me by the wind and once I lost my way and had to find a hillock from which I could see the water. The snow continued to fall, sticking in the lee of the rocks, and the wind howled mournfully over this Arctic wasteland. Just such a Hell did the ancient Scandinavian people imagine for themselves, and the snow that blew against me was falling in the third week of August.

It was this latter fact, I think, that made the deepest impression on the *Bay Eskimo* sailors, for they forgot all about the injury to their dignity in being asked to sleep on planks in the hold and hurried aboard the *Harmony* without further discussion.

In a way, the snow flurries had the same effect on us and we often thought of what the *Harmony's* people said about our having got so far north that we would never get back. She sailed with the shipwrecked men and the harbor was lonely and empty without them. They had been sixty per cent of the population and the Eskimos, most of the remaining forty per cent, now struck their tents and stole off to the mysterious lakes and barrens south on the shores of Ungava Bay. Talking with Corporal Nicholls, I had, after fumbling for some motive to explain our presence, said we intended to kill a polar bear. The officers of the *Bay Eskimo* had told us Lake Harbor, in Baffin Land, was the place for bears, but

we had no chart for Baffin Land and could not tell within a hundred miles of the truth where that harbor might be. So Corporal Nicholls recommended the Button Islands and we resolved to go there and kill a bear. That done, we could sail south, having the feeling, if not the fact, of having accomplished something. Nicholls warned us to choose a time when the wind was moderate, in going to the islands, lest we be caught in the six-knot tide race and battered to fragments. He said that, technically, we ought to have a license, but since we intended to kill only one bear and had arrived in the smallest vessel ever sailed to Port Burwell, he would waive the requirement.

Nicholls's tour of duty was nearly ended; the following year, he would be picked up by the cutter *Arctic* and carried to Ellesmere Land. I once asked that big, fine-looking man, obviously of excellent breeding and education, why he chose this life and he replied, quietly, that it was because troopers on the Arctic patrol draw double pay. He then changed the subject. I asked him why the place was called Port Burwell, and he did not know.

"I only use the Eskimo word," he said. "The Eskimos call it Killinek; it means the end of the world, the end of things. They go up there to Cape Chidley and see nothing beyond save the Button Islands, so I dare say they're justified."

The end of things. Here was a place where you could actually look at the end of things and see it, a barren lump of frost-shattered rock without life, grace, hope, or even magnificence. In the fiords a little farther south there was the same desolation, but there was grandeur that made you want to live in sight of it. But not here. And we, the three in the

*Dolphin*, resolved to sail beyond it and signalize our passing by killing one of the few creatures that could live in this world of cold sea and dead earth.

Nicholls had played with the idea of trading independently and reluctantly dropped it. The best territory of which he had any knowledge was the western shore of Ungava Bay. But, over and above the physical difficulties of wintering there—that is, the problem of any Arctic expedition—there was the competition of the Hudson's Bay Company. A man had gone there once with a schoonerload of goods and the Hudson's Bay man from Port Burwell had gone over with a small boat full of trade, set up shop beside him, lived under the lifeboat all winter, and undersold the interloper until he moved out the following summer. It was of little use trying to compete with the largest and oldest monopoly in the world.\*

We waited for a suitable day, and not getting it we left anyhow and advanced into that portion of Hudson Strait between Labrador and the Button Islands. The wind was southeast and moderate or we would never have got across. The tide created huge, flat areas, round and whirling, where the wind made no impression on the water and the *Dolphin* refused to answer her helm. At the edge of these colossal eddies, a high, villainous sea ran and we were buffeted sorely. Again and again we were carried unwillingly by these swirls. The compass now had forty-five degrees of westerly variation; that is to say, the north point of the needle, far from pointing toward the geographical north, was actually pointing north-

\* I believe the Canadian Government has modified the monopolistic features in recent years.

west. Our chart gave us a mere blob by way of representing the islands and when we had at last crossed that tide-cursed stretch of water, we found ourselves among swarms of islands having no relation to the cartographer's splotch. Into them we sailed, with a mist slowly obscuring our surroundings. When it became a fog we drove into a maze of ledges, rocks, reefs, and islets, and, finding a narrow slot with deep water, we anchored there and hoped the holding ground was good.

I had been impressed and awed by the North Labrador landscape, but in that enchanted cove, in Sir Thomas Button His Islands, I felt something else. For reasons I am quite unable to explain, I felt terrified. It was not at all bad by day, although I often had the sensation of being watched. But at night—and the nights were getting longer—I was so petrified with fear of something, I knew not what, in the shadows of the cove, that I could not sleep; and many times in the night I got up and, putting my head through the hatch, strove to pierce the darkness and see that which kept me in a cold sweat. But I never discovered what it was.

Our first bear-hunting day was bright and sunny and Robbie and I were put ashore by Niels in the same fashion as we had put him ashore in Mary's Harbor. Naturally, we found no bears, but at that time we did not know they are seldom found far from ice, so we hunted with great diligence. Puffing and tired, we finally reached the highest point on the big island we were exploring and sat down to rest. The whole archipelago was laid out at our feet. To the south was Cape Chidley. To the north we thought we descried faintly Cape Resolution, on Resolution Island, in Baffin Land. To the east was the Atlantic, smiling and blue, and west of us



a solitary berg drifted grandly through Hudson Strait. It was hard to believe that only a few days before it had been snowing.

Since we were relaxed and ashore, Robbie took advantage of the occasion to give me a little advice.

"You remember how, at Port Burwell, you asked Niels to get close to the Eskimos when he took their pictures?" he began.

Bewildered, I said that I did. The only camera aboard was a cheap folding affair belonging to Niels and, when he had gone to make Eskimo pictures, I had, indeed, suggested that he get some close-ups. "Why?" I asked. "What of it?"

"Well," said Robbie slowly, "he's sore as a pup. He said to me: 'Now I don't even know how to take pictures! And I've read the book from cover to cover. I guess I don't know anything.' He's saving up a lot of little grudges and saying nothing, but sooner or later out it will pop."

I thought about these things for a while and decided not to take them seriously. It seemed impossible that he could have been offended by my casual suggestion.

We rose and walked along the heights, discovering a big well-made cairn of rocks in which a staff was jammed; a flag or cloth had once been nailed to it. We examined it carefully but were unable to extract from it its story. And, infantile, we collected a great number of heavy stones and with these wrote our names on a smooth sheet of bare rock. It took us nearly an hour to do it and, when we finished, we felt we had done a fine thing.

Not long after, we heard a sliding of loose rock and hurried to the spot, convinced that we would meet a bear; we

found only the shattered heaps of stone we saw everywhere and, still wondering what had caused the noise, we turned back for the schooner; a silent Nielsen took us aboard an hour before sundown.

Gameless entirely, however, we did not go. Outside the crack in the rocks where we were anchored, Niels saw a seal and because we had heard that the Eskimos hunted them in this fashion, I lay down on deck while Robbie stood by with a rifle. Over my back I raised my legs and waved them to and fro; at once the seal began to swim in small, interested circles. Slowly, he came nearer and, at last, when his head came high out of water, Robbie shot and killed him; he floated, as Nicholls had said he would; others had told us that at this season the seals sank as soon as shot; for this reason we had not fired on any of the many we had seen. Heaving up our anchor, we sailed down on the seal and, pulling him aboard, returned to our haven.

He was a small seal, a *netsek*, and of a rarer kind mostly found in Hudson Strait and Bay. We skinned him, Robbie and I, while Niels looked on in disgust. The dark meat, the liver, and the heart, we put into the biggest frying pan we had and, exclaiming, we inhaled the luscious odor; we were a trifle weary of fish and oatmeal, I suppose. When the meat was ready, black and covered with a burned-flour gravy, Robbie put it on the table.

"Fall to!" cried he.

Niels rolled over in his bunk, exposing his back to us.

"I ain't been here so long I'm turning into an Eskimo!" he growled.

Robbie and I exchanged puzzled glances, and in ten min-

utes we had eaten every bit of the seal meat, and were cooking more. The meat itself was a trifle coarse and the dark, bloody color was unusual, but the heart and the liver were the most marvelous delicacies I have ever eaten. We stuffed ourselves and grunted pleasantly while Niels made believe he was asleep. Afterwards we talked lengthily and decided there was some mistake about bears being in the Button Islands; Lake Harbor we would never find, for we did not even know on which coast of Baffin Land it was. So I announced that in the morning we would start south, and Robbie agreed; since Niels continued to feign sleep, I did not ask his opinion.

And then we turned in and that horrible feeling of something outside on the near-by shore came to me again and I could not sleep. I heard the loose rocks slide once and got up to look, but could see nothing in the dark. This is the closest I have ever come to a sensation that something extra-normal, supernatural, was menacing me and I put it down to a subconscious clear sight of our situation. Deep inside I must have known every piece of frayed rope and every item of unseaworthiness; I must have known that the men on the *Harmony* might easily be right; we might truly have come so far north that we could never get back again. It may be that a secret knowledge, unadmitted even to myself, that the *Dolphin* by her very nature was destined to disaster, took hold of me here in these lonely Arctic islands and caused the sweaty forebodings which gripped me during the long black nights in the Button Islands. In any case, I was frantically elated when we started back for Labrador in the morning.

The air was bright and sunny. The breeze was light. The



swift east-going tide bore us rapidly along, so that it and the wind were just sufficient to take us to Cape Chidley, a high mass of crumbling rock which we found was actually an island of perhaps one-mile diameter. Behind it there was a bay leading back into the land and we looked at it for a long time, because the wind died away and left us wallowing in



the swell. By the time a late afternoon breath had made up, I was afraid to proceed through the rows of islands south of the cape and we worked into the bay behind Chidley. Slowly we drifted, microscopic, between the towering cliffs and when it was all but dark we reached the head of the bay, a deep, round basin with great hills on all sides; we anchored

in nine fathoms. And since our cable was too short for water of this depth, we lengthened it with pieces of wire rope left over when the *Dolphin* had been re-rigged.

That place had no spooky feeling and later I found, in the *Arctic Pilot*, that it was Sir Terence O'Brien Harbor, known but not charted. The tinkle of cold brooklets cascading from the heights to the still water below is the thing I remember best about the place.

It was villainously difficult to get out of Sir Terence O'Brien Harbor. In the first place, the holding ground was so good that the anchor was loath to leave it and the three of us pulled until our lungs were ready to burst. Then, after heaving with the jib halyard and breaking the hook out, we found that neither wind nor tide seemed to affect this pocket and it took us five solid hours to sail two miles. When at last we cleared the cliffs of Cape Chidley and felt the fine breeze and swell of the open Atlantic we were as men released from imprisonment in a mine; this stark wasteland was showing a disturbing reluctance to let us go.

We sailed south, and merely seeing a southerly course on the compass made our spirits soar. We found the entrance to McClellan Strait, where we had anchored weeks before, but decided on finding an anchorage farther on, perhaps in Ekortiarasuk Fiord since we knew it had never been entered. The mouth of Joksut Fiord came abeam and then, to my navigating confusion, the entrances to two separate bays appeared beyond it; this where there was supposed to be but one and that unexplored.

So. We could make discoveries after all. Excited immeasurably by the possibilities of these bays and their exploration,

we forgot all about our hurry to get south before the lateness of the season made it impossible and, choosing the center fiord as most mysterious and impressive of the three, we hauled up close to the westerly wind and stood into it. At first it seemed, as we thrashed up against the increasing, squally wind, that we were in a wide, shallow bay which penetrated into the land some six or seven miles only, but presently the south shore opened and we saw that the bay continued, first south and then west. Flinging spray from our bows, we made into the inner bay and saw that this fiord—our own private fiord—did indeed go a long way into the land.

Tack on tack, we worked ourselves ever deeper into it and we marveled at its size and beauty; it was not, in truth, so large or so beautiful as many others, but we felt we had discovered it and therefore it possessed in our eyes every excellence a fiord could possess. In Robbie's and mine, that is. For Niels I cannot speak, as the only comment he made was that we had crossed a shoal spit which had almost caught our keel. Looking astern, I saw yellowish water at the place he pointed out, but to me it seemed the effect of the late afternoon sun rather than a submerged shoal.


The wind was increasing and gusty and we sailed with our lee rail buried half the time. We paid little attention, for we were too excited; at last we were actually making a discovery; ahead the fiord narrowed just on the far side of a low island and, beyond, it seemed to wind away for miles among the bare hills. But, as we drew closer to the passage, the gusts grew in violence and, frightened of delicate work with such heavy and baffling winds, we rounded up near the island and dropped our anchor.

Having made up the sails and generally snugged down for the night, we went below and I drew out our chart; it bore no relation to the places where we had sailed that day. We were explorers and it was splendid.

The whine in the rigging became a shrill howl every time a squall struck us, and even in this landlocked bay the sea was bumpy and we rolled uneasily. After our suppers were eaten—the remains of the seal—Niels stood long and thoughtfully in the cockpit; when I peered out, I saw the moonlight on his face and he looked more thoughtful and gloomy than ever. Presently he returned to the cabin.

“It’s blowing,” he said. “It’s blowing hard and I wouldn’t be surprised if it got worse.”

Then he turned in.







## RETREAT

BY MORNING Niels had been proved right: the wind had increased to a steady force which can safely be called a moderate gale. But with frequency this velocity was augmented by violent squalls, fierce, cold presences showing themselves only as torn paths in the water before striking with weight and abandon, making the *Dolphin* sheer wildly at her anchor. I thought of what that same deadly combination of gale and squall must be doing to the open water along the coast and felt scared.

"Today we can't sail," I said. "Better we stay here and thank God it's a harbor; offshore there must be a big sea and in these squalls I doubt if canvas would stand."

Niels nodded his approval and Robbie agreed; the wind was bitterly cold and, though we rolled and wallowed, we were protected from the worst and could stay in the warm cabin while otherwise we would be struggling on a cold deck with frantic canvas.

Our library was mostly old magazines—cheap, gaudy, and unsatisfying—a few dull, twice-read novels, and a pile of year-old English newspapers from a Mission station. We had read every one of them. We had read them all and tired. But the library included two books which could be read and thought about again and again. One was Bowditch's *American Practical Navigator*. The other one was given us by Randolph Stevens's oldest son the day before we sailed. He brought me a package, carefully wrapped, and put it in my hands. "This is a book of charts and sailing directions," he said. "It will help you wherever you go." I thanked him and put the package aside; in Halifax, when I opened it, I was amazed and somewhat disappointed to find that the package contained, not the *Labrador Pilot*, but a Bible.

Now, anchored in a bight in a fiord we ourselves had found, we read the Bible incessantly, not as moral precept and parable, but as literature. We could find any kind of story we needed to suit our mood. There was the solemn, the gay, the risqué, the dramatic, the grand, almost anything our varied and varying tastes could demand. Sometimes we read the tales aloud, our faces serious and absorbed or our snickers audible above the scream of the rigging. It was a revelation to us that there should be such fine meat in a book which had come to bore us simply because it had been thrust down

our throats when we were children too young to have even a remote understanding of it.

When Robbie or Niels was reading the Bible, I read Bowditch and once I was inspired by that fine book to make a chip log with the aid of a piece of boxwood, a length of fishing line, and a jackknife. This archaic instrument serves to measure a ship's speed through the water. The "chip" I made triangular, the lower side rounded and weighted with a bit of lead which I hammered to shape from one of our fishing jigs. The line I made as short as possible—one-tenth standard length, as a matter of fact—and the seconds I planned to count: one hundred and one, one hundred and two, one hundred and three, and so forth; as I have said, we had no timepiece.

Bowditch, like the sailing directions, was a pleasure to read; some chapters, such as the one on ice in the North Atlantic, and the one on West Indian hurricanes, I read so thoroughly that the roll of the *Dolphin* became unnoticeable and the noise of the wind inaudible; later I discovered I had read with such attention that I could recite most of those chapters from memory. Of late there has been some hullabaloo about group-writing and the impression is given that this literary form is a kind of brave-new-world-in-the-making product. Those who imagine this to be true are unacquainted with some of the finest group-writing in the English language, for they have never read any of the sixty-odd volumes of sailing directions and pilots wherein the United States Hydrographic Office and the British Admiralty describe the coasts and islands and seas of the earth in language

remarkable for its precision, beauty, and style. The books have no authors; they are the sum total of the seafaring experience of thousands of mariners, collected and given form by anonymous groups of writers. It gives me pleasure to recite to myself this line from page 217, second paragraph, of the *Arctic Pilot* (vol. II): "The peaks of these northern mountains are not glaciated, but angular and rugged; not rounded by attrition, but split by frost." The unknown writer speaks of the mountains of North Labrador and truthful image of these peaks could not be better compressed.

But this constant reading served only partly to drug us to the increasing force of the gale that battered our anchorage. The first whole day passed with the wind increasing slightly but the squalls becoming even more frequent and violent. On the second day, Niels stood long in the cockpit and finally called down to us: "Come out here. Here is something I never have seen in twenty years at sea."

From a point near the entrance to the inner reaches of the fiord, to which we had not yet penetrated, the wind was issuing in tremendous gusts that lifted the water in whirls and carried it down the bay. Some of these whirls of white water and hurricane-force wind were fifteen and twenty feet high, shining and shaped like a cornucopia, the point of the horn down to the surface of the wind-riven water. It was almost as if a literal devil were trying to give himself a physically perceptible shape. The whole surface of the fiord was torn and white and our anchor cable was ever taut, hard, and straight as a bar.

Fortunately, the worst squalls, those which raised tall

whirls of smoking water, passed several hundred yards south of us. But what we got was bad enough. Each day we rose after a tense night of listening to the wind and bracing ourselves against the constant roll and wallow, determined to leave if we possibly could, and each day the wind was as wild and devilish as ever. Once, the three of us tried to get up the anchor and it might just as well have been that the cable was made fast to a mountain and the ship frozen in concrete, for our combined strength could get in not one inch; of course we had no windlass.

On the fifth morning of our stay in the fiord, I awoke at dawn a trifle disturbed about something, although I did not know what. The wind's voice was as loud as ever—or was it? It seemed that perhaps its truculence had become slightly less and the motion a trifle easier. We had, the day before, lowered the centerboard, thinking it might stop something of the schooner's unchecked rolls. But, just as I made up my mind that the wind must be moderating, a squall struck and I realized that it had not; quickly I dozed off again.

It cannot have been a minute later that a frightful blow was struck our schooner and we rushed out on deck like rabbits.

The *Dolphin* was in the breakers under a frowning eminence of broken boulders and ice-rounded rock. With every sea she lifted and fell, hard and terrifyingly, on the unyielding sand and rocks, drifting nearer to the shore, now only ten feet off, with every blow. I ran forward to retrieve the anchor, which we thought had dragged, but in came twenty feet of cable and then a frayed end; it had parted. The pounding

seas bore down on the schooner, heeled over at forty-five degrees from the vertical and, laying her stern against the jagged shore, went to work at the destroying of her.

I dived below and stood in the cabin for a full minute, but in that place it was impossible not to believe the schooner was falling apart, so I came out again and with the other two stepped onto the boulders to watch; for there, at least, you could think, and desperately did we need to. If we had had a small boat and a spare anchor, we might conceivably have launched it, planted the anchor as a kedge, and dragged ourselves off. But we had neither boat nor anchor, so we did an ineffectual-seeming thing. The tide was low and, ripping up the cabin floor, we got out a pig-iron block weighing about a hundred pounds. Around it we secured a wire bridle and to that we made fast the remaining anchor cable. Then, all three together, we flung that contrivance into the deep water on the exposed port side. We pulled it. It dragged.

So, for two hours, we carried rocks on board and threw them on top of the piece of pig iron in order to hold it in place; it made quite a respectable heap. We shifted a large quantity of ballast up into the bows in order to lighten her aft and then we sat on the shore watching; until the tide came up there was nothing else to do. And during those two hours of constant battering on the rocks the *Dolphin* did not fall apart, simply because she was light and strong and cunningly fastened. Nonetheless, I expected momentarily to see that the sides had at last been beaten in, for as the water dropped away in the hollow of a wave it could be seen that part of the side, normally curved, was flattening out; had those frames been of the heavy sawn variety, they would



have been fractured and the planks would have given way.

With nothing to do but wait and see if the tide would rise before the *Dolphin* was pounded to pieces, I walked alone to a spur of barren hillside from where I hoped to see how bad the sea was. As I walked, I thought out as carefully as I could what must be done if, instead of coming off, the schooner was driven higher up on the land and left there a wreck. The nearest settlement, the only one in the world so far as we were concerned, was Port Burwell, twenty-five miles away, air-line. But between us and it there were the boiling waters of McClellan Strait, and possibly another such passage, for the chart indicated that Joksut went through to Ungava Bay. Without a boat we could never cross; therefore, the sails must be saved first and every bit of wood, rope, and wire; from these fragments we would make a canoe and then, using what food we could save, we would win our way to Port Burwell. Or we would try.

From the spur I could see out across the Atlantic and to my dumfounded amazement, its face was serene, touched only by the breath of a moderate westerly wind. The outer bay of our fiord was churned by a moderate gale. The inner bay, where we were stranded, was still being tormented by a violent storm. At once it became clear that this thing was a local condition. The westerly wind from Ungava Bay was compressed by the mountains and then, as though from a gun, discharged over the fiord; during the five days we had lain there, the Atlantic had been smooth and splendid.

I also had a view across a narrow sandy spit into Ekortiar-suk, another unexplored fiord. It was calm.

I ran back and told Robbie and Niels; if we could get



her off now, we would be safe. At least, safe is the word I used for our situation aboard an anchorless, rock-pounded schooner, should she float.

As the tide rose—and it was the six-foot tide of the true Labrador, not the thirty-footer of Hudson Strait—she began to drag farther ashore, but between the pig-iron kedge and desperate poling with our sweep, we held her for half an hour and she floated forward, although the shocks as the sea raised her and dropped her on the rocks were as bad as ever.

As Niels poled and Robbie hauled on the pig iron, I hoisted the reefed mainsail, sheeted in flat, and at that moment one of those great squalls struck us, driving layers of spindrift with it and, using the sail as a lever, hurled the *Dolphin* over on her side.

Something had to give. The sail had to burst, the schooner had to collapse, crushed between the upper stone of the wind-filled canvas and the nether stone of the boulders on which she lay, or she had to drag herself off.

Robbie hoisted the jib and she dragged herself off.

She made a lunge forward and struck the submerged cairn we had built over the pig iron. She glanced off it and crashed against a boulder. She glanced off that and then, with a tremendous wrench, urged by sail and pole, she wrenched herself free and shot out into the deep water, almost capsizing with the thrust of the mainsail.

Swiftly we dropped the main and jib and replaced it with the reefed foresail, its gaff dropped and lashed to the mast, leaving the sail scandalized, a minute three-cornered piece of canvas that drove us swiftly out of the fiord. We shifted the ballast back to its normal position.

We swore and shouted and thanked God; we were without an anchor, we were not even sure how long the schooner would float, it was September 1, and we were still far north of the tree line, but we were jubilant; the *Dolphin* was free and homeward bound.

As it seemed from the high spur, the outer bay was smooth and, when we reached the far sea, we had to set the whole foresail, the jib, and the main, in order to move, for the wind was light to moderate. That fiord had harbored a treacherous and unusual meteorological phenomenon and had I not since heard of several others like it, I would now doubt having seen what I did indeed see. I tried out my homemade log and, as we passed Cape Kakkiviak, got a result of five knots.

"Just the same," Niels muttered, "there's something wrong. She don't steer like she used to; look at that." He pointed at the tiller; it was slightly down, that is, with the booms broad off, she needed a little lee helm to keep her on her course. For the experiment's sake, we put her on the other tack and then she needed the helm nearly hard up to maintain her.

I went below, took hold of the centerboard chain, and pulled. Nothing happened. We had tried to pull it up back there on the boulders where we had been, for a while, a wreck, and it had been jammed. It was still jammed. I went out on deck.

"The centerboard's squashed up on one side," I announced. "We'll have to steer her this way until we can beach her somewhere and bend it back into place." And that is the reason I do not like a centerboard.

The schooner leaked, but not nearly so badly as we had expected; though the water she took in was considerable, it constituted a nuisance rather than a menace. As for the spot on her side pounded flat by the awful beating she had received, in a few days this sprang back into its original shape. It seemed to me, then, that there was much to be said for resilience in ships and people; it seemed that, as an abstract virtue, it was preferable to brute strength. The time when I would decide that resilience alone is of small avail without inherent strength to boot was still weeks away.

Our food supply was low, in fact almost exhausted, and for the first time we were unable to catch more than a few fish. We had little firewood left and saved it for meals, which each day were scantier. A series of calms made our passage along the coast slow and often we lay idle on the oily water, a lowering gray sky overhead, and inshore the jagged heap of the frost-split Torngats. Fresh snow covered their dark peaks and flanks and every day there was more of it. Once it fell on us, but lightly.

We had to put into Hebron in order to buy a new anchor and fresh provisions, but it took us five days to make it and twelve hours before arriving we ate every scrap of food aboard. For the last meal I cooked a kind of oatmeal pancake; it was wonderfully good and, try as I will, I have never been able to make one like it since.

Old Man Lyle was the Mission storekeeper; he had heard of us and was surprised to find us still on the coast. He said he thought we had gone south long ago and warned us that we were overstaying our grace. We asked about an anchor and found that there was not one in Hebron that could be

of any use to us; at the moment we were held in one place by yet another of our contrivings. We had that fifteen-pound graplin and to its shank we had lashed another hundred-pound pig of iron ballast. It held somehow, but of faith in its skinny prongs we had none.

We spent the night with the old man and his son Sam, and told them of the bent centerboard, our need for firewood, and the necessity for standing the schooner out somewhere in the near future, for she was most difficult to manage and the centerboard's resisting face made her slow. Lyle recommended that we combine beaching and gathering firewood with a hunt for caribou, since Sam was anxious to start killing them; they were expected out near the bays at this season. The place for such an excursion, he said, was a bay just north of Cape Mugford and Sam would pilot us.

Sam was a fine fellow, young and very decent; he was bilingual, speaking Eskimo and English with equal facility, although he was of pure white blood. But there was much about him that was Eskimo: his gestures, his readiness to admit he did not know, when he did not, his calm, humorous dignity. Living among so excellent a people had been a very good thing for Sam Lyle and he made us feel both crude and sophisticated. He brought a rifle, some biscuits, some pilot bread, and smoked salmon, and in one day's sailing we reached the fiord and, penetrating to its head, anchored off the mouth of a salmon river.

It was in this bay that we first tried to use a kayak. In Port Burwell we had tried to buy one and failed, but in Hebron we located in an hour an Eskimo who would trade a good kayak for a Mauser rifle if, in the bargain, there was included

the spectacle of my circling the *Dolphin* in it. I successfully performed the feat and the man left the kayak, taking the rifle with him. All of us were satisfied, and in the rigging we tied the long, slender sealskin hunting boat. It was the only kind of dinghy that possibly could have been stowed on the *Dolphin*. To go ashore, one man took his place in the cockpit and a second man, more or less awash, lay flat and motionless on the after deck. Then, gingerly, breathlessly, slowly, ashore. Later we developed another technique; this involved towing a length of thin fishing line ashore. The kayaker would step out on the beach and the pair remaining aboard would pull the light boat out to the schooner to repeat the process until the three of us stood on the beach. Our landing in the bay, however, was effected by the two-men-in-a-one-man-boat method.

The name of the fiord was Napaktok; it is the first one north of Cape Mugford and its name means something about having wood in it; it did have, near the river, a pathetic stand of scrub pine.

There was also a small house here, deserted since its owner had died of influenza in 1918. I think he was a white man, although I am not sure; Sam never made any distinction between white men and Eskimos, save linguistically. I only wish he were right; it would be a glorious thing for us if we were as jolly and good-tempered as they are. In the house there were fish nets and fathoms of new rope. There were tools and many other things, all of inestimable value to the Eskimos who had visited the bay. But not a solitary thing had been touched in the seven years it had lain there, ownerless.

Sam and Robbie went after caribou and Niels and I brought the *Dolphin* in to the sloping beach at high tide. With the fore and main gaffs we made props to hold her upright and when the tide went down, there she was, exposed on the hard, dry ground and ready for our attentions. The centerboard, as we had deduced, was crushed up under her and formed a scoop on the port side which must have offered more resistance than a towed bucket. We dug out a hollow below the board and then tried to bend it straight. It was a quarter-inch-thick piece of spring steel, though, and every clever artifice and exertion of power we could bring to it availed us nothing. It would bend—a little—and when we let go it would spring back into place. Levers, hammers, tears, and curses did nothing for it and we were afraid to touch the centerboard trunk lest we start a bad leak we could not fix. So we pried the steel blade into the trunk as far as we could and contented ourselves with that; it would not cure her weird steering, but it would help it. As for her windward ability, that was rather thoroughly liquidated; there had not, in truth, been much of it in the first place.

She was a shabby thing now, the *Dolphin*. The stove had so dried out the poorly seasoned wood of her cabin that the daylight had for some time been visible through the after bulkhead for the entire length of a seam. Now the gap was so wide that a finger could be thrust through it and, without effort, twiddled. So, with a knife, I made a strip to fill it. That was successful, but there still remained our furry, worn-out running rigging and I got to thinking of the fine unused rope in the dead man's house. The Eskimos had not touched it, but that, I told myself, was because they were a supersti-

tious lot. I was a realist (I maintained) and had no need to be bound by such things. The rope did no one any good where it was; let it go into the *Dolphin's* rigging and be of use again, as rope should.

When Sam and Robbie came back, they were with salmon but no trace of caribou, for they had not yet come out of the country. And I spoke to Sam about the rope. He said it hardly belonged to anyone but the dead man. Still, no one liked to touch it. . . .

I went to the house and cut off enough to make new hal-yards and sheets. These I rove off, with Nielsen's help, and then the tide was up and we floated the schooner away to an anchorage. At suppertime I thought of the rope I had stolen much more than I expected to. I said it was not stealing, but salvage. I said it was admirable of the Eskimos not to disturb the dead man's things, but, paradoxically, I said it was not unadmirable for me to do what they would not. This silent argument with myself went on for a while and then, tired of disputing, I quietly drew a wallet from beneath my mattress and went ashore. The value of the rope I computed in Battle Harbor prices and from the result I deducted ten per cent for the fact that it was rather suspect through having stayed unused for so long. The price at which I arrived by this process was a considerable portion of the money in the wallet, but I took it out and, entering the house, I laid it on the floor.

Then I returned to the *Dolphin*, feeling quite happy and light-hearted; I continued, nevertheless, to regard myself as a realist and the Eskimos as a superstitious lot.

Sam had been sleeping on the floor in a beautiful sleeping

bag but the centerboard trunk, thrusting its ungainly triangle up in the middle of the cabin, made the space narrow, so we decided to return to Hebron, after another day of hunting and cutting wood.

The next day it blew a hard, cold northwest wind and we spoke to our first fishermen in a long time. These arrived, tired and sleepless, in a motor boat; they had been unable to regain their schooner owing to the weather, so, after a vile night, they had decided to gather some firewood before returning. They said they were about the last schooner so far north and fools to be there. We gathered wood, I killed some geese with rocks, and the others, setting the dead man's gill net in the stream, got a handsome haul of salmon and trout; it was a good place, Napaktok. No caribou, however, did we see, so, the cargo of firewood complete, we set off for Hebron the next afternoon.

The wind was hard and squally, off the land, and Sam got seasick as soon as we cleared the bay. The third squall burst the main peak halyards (made of the dead man's rope) and we replaced them with the old ones, our own. Then the fore throat halyards, also the dead man's, let go and we had to replace them. Before three hours had gone by, every thread of rope from the deserted house at the head of the fiord had parted and we were back on our original worn gear; the theft had been committed and, on top of it all, my conscience money had been wasted.

The day of our arrival back in Hebron was our last clear day for a week. The sky filled with heavy clouds, trailing fragments of mist over the mountain tops, and a cold wind from the north gradually made up and grew in force, slow



and powerful, varied with heavy squalls. By nightfall it was blowing a fresh gale and because we had done what we could by way of ground tackle, we went ashore to spend the evening with the Lyles and let it blow, which it did.

Inside that hospitable, well-timbered house, it was warm and cozy and cheerful and, except for its shuddering, you would not have believed the elements assaulted it as they did. There was an old phonograph and some very antique records; again and again we played "What's the Matter with Father? He's All Right!" and found it very fine. There were comic recitations and these, too, were pronounced excellent and we meant it. Old Man Lyle told us about trading and about Eskimos, and about hunting and doings in the winter; young Sam tried to identify our fiord for us, saying he thought it must be Tikkerachook. And we were very happy in there, until it was time to go aboard once more. Then we went out in the blackest darkness, leaning back against the wall of wind coming down from the Tornegats, from Hudson Strait, from Baffin Land, from the Polar Sea, from the outermost edge of lifeless eternity. It was stupefying.

We found the schooner still holding onto her pathetic excuse for an anchor and, wearing every garment we possessed, covered with all our blankets, we lay freezing in our bunks, holding our ears against the pain of hearing the sound that now hovered in the rigging and waiting tensely between dozes to hear the frightful crash we had heard in Tikkerachook repeated, for the edge of a rocky islet was only fifty feet astern.

In the morning it was thirty and there we held, the thin prongs of that graplin caught in some cranny in the rocky

bottom, but often it seemed, as we swung, that the prongs had broken and we were going ashore, for the weight of the wind lacked little of the force it had in Tikkerachook. During the morning, a high-sided motor boat, white, clinker-built, and in the style of a Jersey seaskiff, entered the harbor, dropped two anchors, and lay there, challenging us to identify her. So, in Sam Lyle's boat, which we had borrowed for our stay in Hebron, we rowed over and looked at her stern. Nanu, read the name.

If you juxtapose it with the words "shaving cream," the name "Williams" immediately takes on significance, but if you say "Williams—Labrador" you get nothing. Yet the same Williams who is responsible for so many of the freshly shaven faces which sally forth to business conquest and discouragement every morning in the United States was also the tall, spare man, white-headed and hard of hearing, who invited us aboard. Every year, for fifteen years, he has gone to the Labrador and cruised a portion of the coast in some kind of craft. We had heard of him; in a schooner named the *Norseman*, with a crew composed exclusively of Swedes and Norwegians (these for atmosphere, I suppose), he had cruised the coast before as far as Nain, I believe, and now he was experimenting with this motor boat. She was four feet longer than the *Dolphin*, she was wider, nearly as deep, and much higher. She had a big, powerful engine, she had full headroom, a cheery coal fire was burning in her big range, there were electric lights, good navigating equipment, a forward stateroom, modern plumbing, locker space, a table, a good galley—she was all a small boat for distant voyaging should have been, as ours was all one should not have been.

She had a dinghy and an extra anchor besides the two already down.

Chunks of venison lay in the cockpit and we heard that one of Williams's two companions had killed a fifty-point caribou in Saglek Bay, just to the north. The motor boat had been as far north as Nachvak, midway between Hebron and Cape Chidley.

When we left the *Nanu* we had a haunch of venison, we knew we would remember Williams, not as a big shaving-cream man, but as the foremost authority on Labrador trout and salmon streams, and we were green with envy; the *Nanu* was a beautiful craft. She had come in to take refuge from the storm; her owner said that, in the gale blowing outside, no canvas would stand and we believed him.

There was an Eskimo dance that night and we were invited to it by one of the several Eskimos invariably to be found in the *Dolphin's* cabin. It took place in one of the wooden shacks and the music was supplied by a sweating accordion player; the room was jammed with people, happy, good-humored, and very courteous. The dance was an Eskimo version of a square dance learned, I suppose, from the Newfoundland fishermen who came to the outer islands in the summer. The girls were nicely dressed in clean red-trimmed cassocks; their rosy cheeks and bright eyes led you to expect the sweet youth of figures that even heavy skirts could not hide.

A few times they went through the steps of the dance and then we were given partners and made to join. Robbie was bashful and at first refused, but his partner threw a long bandanna around his neck and pulled him out on the floor.

We had a splendid time, Robbie and I; Niels did not come to the dance, for even as he was not Eskimo enough to eat seal meat neither was he Eskimo enough for the unalcoholic, high-spirited frivolity we saw that night. I must not labor the point, for I have mentioned it several times now, but the Eskimos are wonderful people; the only persons I have ever heard say a word against them were traders, missionaries, or men so ignorant and uncouth that the Eskimos found them intolerable. We danced until long after midnight, forgot the gale that snored through the village, forgot the blackness of the night beyond the walls of the hut, forgot everything except having fun with a crowd of grand people.

When we left, their soft, gay voices followed us: "Aksunai! Aksunai!" for they knew that we had now a few Eskimo words and would understand if they said good-night in their own language.

By daylight the gale had moderated ever so slightly and we decided that, running dead before it, the double-reefed foresail would stand. We pulled up the weighted graplin and found that the two prongs which held us were almost straightened out. A few miles an hour more velocity to that gale, another squall, or perhaps just another hour at that anchorage and the *Dolphin* would have been up on the rocky island astern, the work Tikkerachook began being finished.

On the wharf there were people waving to us and, as we passed it and went flying out of the harbor, we heard a girl's clear voice:

"Goo'-by! Don' get los'!"



## FAREWELL TO THE LABRADOR

THE gale drove us to the cliffs of Cape Mugford and then, diminishing and dying away to a calm, it left us wallowing wildly in the heavy swell; it put us to swearing that, a hundredfold, we preferred a gale to a calm. We besought Providence to let us trade in our windless swell for a used hurricane; we snapped at each other, we lowered sails, we hoisted them; we grew weary of the sight of slatting canvas and the wrenching sounds as flaying booms brought up sharp against their sheets. And while we were feeling as badly as possible we heard a motor and saw, far inshore, Williams's *Nanu* proceeding at ten knots toward the south.

And, though we did not talk about it, each of us remem-

bered the sale of our own engine in Battle Harbor and thought of what it would mean to us now, with what little windward ability we had badly impaired by the conversion of the centerboard from an asset into a drawback.

At night, the light winds in the wake of the storm moved us, by the dim starlight, through the long, winding thoroughfares among the darkly bulking islands. One evening we struck a boulder while trying to enter a strange harbor without the lead; the presence of a fishing schooner led us into that careless move. We got off without trouble and a day later we rounded up and anchored before the Hudson's Bay post at Davis Inlet.

"You're late," Keats told us. "You're late and you're going to get the gales that whip this coast every year in September. I thought you'd gone long ago."

"We still meet fishermen," I protested.

"Aye, fishermen, but they are the very last stragglers who have tried to get an extra load of fish. And they use big, able schooners more than twice your length and four times your tonnage. You be careful!"

From time to time, Robbie and I had discussed spending the winter on the Labrador, hunting and trapping with the Eskimos, and now we talked of it with Keats. It could have been arranged, but there was the Nielsen problem. Robbie and I had developed a working arrangement which allowed us to inhabit that cracker box of a cabin without driving each other insane, but Niels was consistently silent, grouchy, and dour. Between him and me there was no very bad feeling—he had apparently forgiven me my adolescence—but between Niels and Robbie there was the most virulent enmity, prin-

cipally on Nielsen's side. I find it difficult to describe his psychology in this matter, for I did not understand it then and I do not now. Any grudge against me was entirely comprehensible and very much justified. No man could have felt happy sailing in such a tea kettle as the *Dolphin*, under the command of a boy half his age and with none of his experience. But his ill-will was concentrated on Robbie because, as well as I can determine, he had been galled first by one small offense or slight, then by another, and another, until the sum of these trivia equaled, in his eyes, a full-blown affront. They rarely spoke; I was always buried in Bowditch, Robbie cooked and fussed at the stove, Niels pretended to sleep.

We decided against spending the winter because the situation, manageable now, might become a serious thing, once we were cut off by the snow and ice. So south we continued to Hopedale. And all this time, along four hundred miles of stormy coast, with icebergs in the sea and uncharted shoals in the harbors, we sailed without an anchor save that fifteen-pound graplin with the pig iron lashed to its shank.

In Hopedale, at last, we got an anchor and a new warp of heavy manila. The *Harmony* was there, making her last trip of the year, and her captain shook his head when he saw us.

"You've stayed too long," he said. "This coast is no joke now. You'll have a hard time getting home."

The storekeeper, when he sold us the anchor, shook his head too. "You're going to need that thing badly," he told us. "I only hope you will be able to get where you can use it when some of these fall gales pounce on you."



Almost everybody we met said something of the sort; it was very unnerving.

It blew great guns the next day and it was cold and foggy, but the wind was fair and, with all her canvas, we sent the *Dolphin* staggering south. We saw a solitary schooner that had missed the harbor and was beating her way back to it under reduced canvas. All day the wild northwester drove us along, howling and nipping at our heels. At night we made our way between the islands; once the wind fell away, but by morning it was roaring again and we slammed, wing and wing, through Cutthroat Tickle and out into the open sea, across the mouth of Hamilton Inlet. The *Dolphin*, driven beyond all reason, a preventer backstay all that held





the swaying spars in the vessel, shot herself half out of the rolling, yeasty seas and, crashing, brought herself up against the opposing walls of water ahead.

It was the most brutal kind of sail-dragging and it brought on the inevitable result; in Robbie's watch, that afternoon, she jibed wildly in a cataclysm of flying canvas and splintering wood. The fore gaff jaws fell to pieces. We made new ones by tying lengths of a grocery box to the gaff and, having learned nothing, we set the foresail again and continued the wild, foolhardy ride.

But that cracker-box jaw could not last long, so we put into a place called Pax Harbor, a channel between two rocky islands, that is all, and there we were able to buy a piece of

hardwood. From it I carved out with my knife a new set of jaws. The holes which had to be bored so that nails would pass without splitting my work I made by heating a nail and burning them through; we had not even tools aboard.

There was at this place a big hundred-ton schooner, the property of the only independent trader we met on the coast. He was a short, wide man, quick in his movements and very sharp of eye; if there was a penny to be made on all the rocky coast, here was the man to make it; he looked precisely like what he was, a first-rate trader-sailor. And he said: "I'm getting out of this. Time was when I broke even and made a little profit; now, I just barely break even, and next year I'll probably not do that. I'm getting out of this Labrador trade as soon as I can." He then commenced to tell us that we were too long on the coast, but we headed him off; we were nervous enough as matters stood.

We visited his ship, but it was not very romantic; his main cabin was indistinguishable from a general store in a village of fifteen hundred people and he traded not so much for fur as for cargoes of fish; she reeked of it.

A little south of Pax Harbor we passed a Norwegian freighter, the *Kungshavn* of Haugesund, as I remember. Her people gathered to see us as we sailed past, close aboard, and Nielsen sang out in Norwegian to them. It caused a considerable commotion and by the time the officer on the bridge recovered sufficiently from his surprise to bawl that the steamer was bound for Indian Harbor and who the hell were we, she was out of hearing.

Labrador autumn was everywhere now; there were no trees to sear and redden before their leaves fell, but the winds

were brusque and arrogant with foreknowledge of their winter strength. Offshore, shivering Newfoundlanders fished from dories, even as it is done on the Grand Banks. Reefs, we noted, were often in their big mainsails. We made a harbor or two while south-bound, for the wind was ahead and we grew weary of the business of flogging the *Dolphin*, making leeway like a crab, against it. One was Domino Harbor and after a red twilight the darkest night fell and there were only the lanterns of two fishing schooners to keep us company.

Farther south, we beat our way into St. Francis Harbor and people came at once from the settlement, because they thought we were doctors. We said we were not, but they went on describing their infirmities in hope that, no matter what we said, we would still turn out to be doctors. It was now late September and, when at last we had convinced them that we were just sailing, they told us it was late in the year for so small a craft to be in the water.

From there it was one day's work, a long leg and a short one, to Battle Harbor, and for us the end of the Labrador. Behind us lay all the coast; we had negotiated every foot of it under sail. We had taken the calms, the fogs, the ice, the gales, and even the stranding, and still our *Dolphin* was afloat. A small voice deep within warned against self-congratulation, but struggle against it as we would, we felt it had been a hard thing to do with such a craft, and we patted ourselves on the back for it.

MacMillan's steamer, the *Peary*, was tied up at the wharf; she had just come from Etah, and aft on her there were lashed the planes, their wings removed. We anchored and

caught our hook on the *Peary's* chain, sprawled half across the harbor to aid her when she was ready to leave; Robbie went aboard and asked Captain Steel to retrieve it for us. The men on the *Peary* were taciturn and uncommunicative. They said that valuable scientific data had been gathered and then they declared, a little aggressively, that the expedition had been a great success.

I was climbing up the dock in the ruddy twilight to go to the store and, struck by the quiet, chaste beauty of the moment, I leaned against a pile of boxes and watched for a while. Beyond the *Dolphin* lay the *Peary* and there were acres of fish-drying racks beyond her, as well as the cold bulk of Caribou Island and the bloody steel of the waters outside the harbor entrance. Leaning against the taffrail of the *Peary* was one of the fliers. Absently he smoked a cigarette, and his eyes, fixed on nothing, were thoughtful and serious; I recognized the one they called Dick Byrd.

The *Peary* departed in the morning and Steel recovered our anchor for us. She left a gap in the harbor, small though she was, for Battle Harbor is not a big place. Not long after, a wild easterly gale blew up and we thanked God we had not put to sea, for it came in from the wide Atlantic, rolling up tremendous seas, giant shoulders of lethal white water that broke into spume in depths of eight and ten fathoms. The wind was a palpable substance and the village was dominated by the cascades of wild sound which roared forth from the tall wireless mast and its multiplicity of shrouds. All day long it raged fantastically and at nightfall it was even worse. Down in the schooner's cabin we had our fisherman friends, swapping yarns, drinking molasses-sweetened tea, and listening

to comment, criticism, and appraisal of every kind. Some said that on the morrow the surge in the harbor caused by the gale would make it impossible for us to remain; others said the wind was far enough to the north that it would not be felt.

"'Oo should lay the little schooner up here, byes," Tom Cumby told us, his bright blue eyes emerging earnestly from their weather wrinkles. "I've not seen that coast of Newfoundland, but I've been told, and 'oo should lay her up."

But we only smiled; so bloated were we with the quality of our luck that, had it been daylight, we would have taken the *Dolphin* out and sailed her about in the storm for pure arrogance and confidence in ourselves and our vessel.

"Nova Scotia," we said. "There we will end our voyage."

The following day had the gale blowing so that you expected to hear the very rocks of Battle Harbor quake beneath its blows. The air was filled with the roar of the wireless mast and the bellowing of the sea. From a hilltop I watched it and, seeing the magnitude of the graybacks riding offshore, with their veils of spindrift and acres of bursting, exploding crest, I felt suddenly weak and afraid; the *Dolphin* with her high, thin cabin house and her deep, open cockpits in that! I could not look for long from fear of it and yet, when I turned my face and hid myself in a house, some evil fascination in the storm invariably drew me out to stare at it again.

We heard, by the radio, that the *Bowdoin* was holed up in a harbor a few hundred miles north and after the gale abated she came into Battle Harbor. That was on October 1, as I remember.

MacMillan came aboard the *Dolphin* to see how far we had gone and then, having invited us to spend the evening aboard his ship, went ashore to have his first bath in three months. Since none of us had bathed for four months, we were not particularly surprised. It was bright moonlight and cold when we went aboard the *Bowdoin*, and Niels, sulking, refused to accompany Robbie and me. There was, aboard the big schooner, something of the same atmosphere there had been on the *Peary*; scientific data had been gathered and the expedition had been successful. But unlike the *Peary* crowd, MacMillan hedged not a whit; the expedition had gained experience in the use of planes in the Arctic, but new lands it had not discovered. Mysteriously, in the steamer's wake there had grown up a tale of vast new land masses found by the planes. Not, of course, that this was the fault of her people.

It was warm on the *Bowdoin* and she was brightly lighted. She did not heel when you walked to her rail and she was decked over and not a thing on her was flimsy or suspect. A big Diesel drove her when winds were contrary, light, or non-existent. There was a splendid chart table. Robbie and I looked at her and we felt as the inhabitant of a fourth-floor-back room-and-sink might have felt in a fashionable penthouse. We sighed a great deal.

"I made a trip to Hebron in a twenty-five-foot motor boat," MacMillan told me. "But when I got back to Battle Harbor, I laid her up. And you lads ought to do the same. Have you had her out in bad weather? Is she a good sea boat?"

We nodded.

"Well, that's something, but consider what's ahead of

you! Three hundred miles of Newfoundland coast. Once you clear the Strait of Belle Isle, you have just three harbors: Bonne Bay, Bay of Islands, and Port au Port. Gales between northwest and southwest make that coast a lee shore, and nor'westers are the gales at this time of year. When it's not blowing a storm, you'll have the southwest wind in your face and this is October. Lay her up and go home on a steamer. It's too risky, sailing a thing like that schooner back to Nova Scotia."

We agreed it was, but stubbornly we clung to our pointless purpose: the *Dolphin* was to be sailed into Chester Harbor before there could be any talk of laying her up for the winter.

MacMillan shrugged, but later, when we were alone on deck with him, ready to get into our borrowed dory and leave, he spoke again: "Look here; if it's the expense of laying the boat up and buying your passage home, I can fix that and I'll be glad to do it; I hate to see you taking that thing through the Gulf of St. Lawrence this late in the year."

"No," I said, "we're all right. We'll just go on."

For a little while we were silent; I felt we should thank him for the generous offer he had made, but I could not think of suitable words. Between the fingers of my right hand I rubbed together the pair of one dollar bills that represented the sum of the ship's funds.

"How are you for money?" MacMillan broke in. "Have you enough for emergencies?" And, because I was fumbling with the little we had, my reply was not convincing.

"Wait a moment," he commanded and, abruptly, he left us to dive down the after companion.

In a moment he returned and in the bright moonlight I saw that he held in his hand a wad of banknotes. He thrust it into mine; it was fifty dollars.

"Take this," he said. "You may need it. When you get home you can send it back to me."

We began to stutter our thanks, for both of us were deeply moved.

"Not at all! Not at all!" MacMillan quickly brushed aside our awkward protestations. "You're Americans and that's enough for me. You've made a fine trip, too."

I started to say that we were not; our ship was British, Robbie was English, Niels was a Dane, and I, the only American, was just a minority; but the sudden realization that all that would make no difference to MacMillan, regardless of what he said, shut my mouth. He would have done precisely the same thing had we been Zulus.

Without further talk, we shook hands, exchanged wishes for a pleasant passage, and parted. Slowly Robbie and I rowed back to the dock, our breaths hanging white before our mouths, the moon brilliant and crisp overhead in the cold sky; we spoke with feeling of that fine thing done for us by a man we had seen but once before, and that briefly. When I climbed onto the wharf, I slipped and tumbled; the dew had frozen. Then, when we went to the *Dolphin*, we found her spars, her deck, and her rigging coated with a thin layer of crystalline ice.

"It's going to be cold, all right," Robbie observed ruefully.

I admitted it would be cold and added there would undoubtedly be bad gales. Yet it never occurred to us to make that obvious, prudent move recommended by people who



knew these seas; not a thing stood in the way of this sensible procedure save some indefinable compulsion to pit our insignificant scrap of thin oak and soft pine against wind, wave, and fate until she should be broken and destroyed and, for all we knew, ourselves with her. Without necessity we were doing it and, folly on folly, we were both afraid.

Careful not to slip on the icy deck, we dropped into the cabin and lit the smoky kerosene lantern. Its sick, yellow light fell feebly on the unpainted sides of the house, strove without success to penetrate into the forepeak, and showed Nielsen in his bunk, face averted and sleeping or feigning sleep. From the condensation of his breath, the stove was damp and the rough surfaces of the overhead had droplets of water which swayed uneasily as we moved about. One rifle hung in the rack I had whittled out for the two we had originally possessed. It was a bare, Spartan place, and without the routine and neatness we gave it the cabin would have been uninhabitable. A disinterested observer might have said that, even as it was, it could not be regarded as a fit place for human creatures. And when we thought of the Bowdoin, and the contrast, we became gloomy and got into our bunks. But soon we began to think of MacMillan's kindness and it made a very cheering thought to sleep on.


It is now nearly fourteen years since that night and, thinking about it, I am appalled. Today, nothing would induce me to carry on a voyage so obviously dangerous and unnecessary. I would weigh the cost of laying the vessel up against the amount of loss to be sustained were she destroyed and, inevitably, I would decide the prudent and logical thing was laying up for the winter. I would not feel I had disgraced

myself by doing so and I know that I could not be induced to flog so unsuitable a yacht as the *Dolphin* south against sudden gales and strong head winds, for I am an overprudent navigator these days. I enjoy having a nice harbor to leeward where I can take shelter the moment I am dissatisfied with the look of the weather, and I am difficult to satisfy on that point. Either I have less courage now or more sense. If I am on good terms with myself I am disposed to think that my judgment has improved; if not, I readily accuse myself of a lack of courage. Probably there is truth in both views.

But that night in Battle Harbor adolescent thick-headedness was firmly in the saddle, and with daylight we prepared to sail. The *Bowdoin* hove up her anchor and departed while we were eating our breakfast. We finished without haste, made everything secure, visited our friends to tell them good-by, and then, setting our canvas to the stiff wind, we shot through the twisted southern entrance to the harbor and out into the open sea.

Far off we could see the *Bowdoin* standing through the Strait of Belle Isle. Gradually she grew smaller, and after an hour had passed she was hull down. Presently she faded from sight altogether.

And then we were left alone with the bleak red hills and the steel-gray ocean; no other ship of any sort was in sight.





## PAROLE

AS SOON as we were within the strait the wind came from dead ahead, fresh to strong in force. Tack on tack, going off to leeward like a crab, we gained but yards against it. When the tide was contrary, the water was fairly smooth, but we made no headway whatever, even losing ground; when we had the tide with us, the sea became high, steep, and breaking so that the schooner plunged and wallowed without getting far. We tried beating in short tacks close to the land. We tried driving far over to the coast of Newfoundland and then back to Labrador. But the result was the same; when we closed with the Labrador coast we were invariably within sight of the place from which we had de-

parted on the offshore leg. There were harbors for us; there were Chateau Bay, Red Bay, and Forteau Bay, and in them we could have lain until the weather eased and the wind freed. But stubbornly we kept the sea, gaining nothing at all by it save profound discomfort.

It took four days to get through the Strait of Belle Isle and in the fourth day we made more distance than in the other three combined, for the wind hauled and let us lay our course.

It kept hauling until it reached northeast and then, blowing half a gale, it drove us south along the Newfoundland coast almost to Bonne Bay, whereupon it went around to southwest and, straight in our faces, put us to beating forlornly down the bleak shore. I detail these sailing matters because they were the only happenings in our thirty-foot world. Stand a watch, be relieved, eat, sleep, stand a watch, be relieved, and so on; it seemed that we were going to do this forever, like some diminutive *Flying Dutchman*. On deck it was cold and wet, for she sailed with her rail down most of the time, and asleep or, more accurately, lying down in a bunk, you listened to the water flowing directly over your head and to the deep gurgling alongside, separated from your ear by one inch of soft pine. It was like sleeping beneath a swift river in some kind of chamber devised to astonish and torment those who were put in it.

There was no barometer aboard, but we had acquired a sensitivity to atmospheric pressures which told us when it had fallen. Most people feel the barometer without realizing it, for the human spirit is depressed with it. I have little

doubt but that a graphic representation of suicide incidence could be related to a curve showing barometric pressure. There would, of course, be the broad relationship between suicide and economic conditions, but the variations within the economic control could, I feel sure, be shown to follow the rise and fall of the barometer. When a man who is in good digestion and without severe business and social difficulties suddenly becomes impressed with the inconstancy of his friends and the vindictiveness of his enemies, he can usually tap his barometer and discover it has fallen two tenths.

We felt this now and the sky was lowering and gray. The winds were not strong, but they were sudden, like feints from a watchful cat. The sea was oily and overstill, as though it held itself back. "It's a weather breeder," Niels pronounced. Robbie nodded. We all felt the ominous waiting quiet of the air and we assured each other that "it would take a lot of wind to blow this stuff away."

But we kept the sea. And for another two or three days we slowly worked to windward along the west coast of Newfoundland. Then, our supplies low, and likewise our water, we crept into the Bay of Islands. Lark Harbor was the place we had in mind, but the wind fell away to a whisper and there were rain squalls with drifting banks of wet, gray fog. So we moved into something called Beverley Cove, a deserted fishing place with a few unoccupied huts under the dark rocks. A barrier reef stretched most of the way across the entrance to the cove, but we found a narrow passage and, having gone through, dropped our hook just inside. It did

not hold and the tide dragged us up on the reef. We pounded twice, resounding thuds that shook the spars, before we got her off again and out into the bay.

I cannot say why, but that brief grounding discouraged us as much as any single thing that had happened throughout the whole cruise. Disgusted and frightened by it, we had no stomach for entering Lark Harbor now that night had fallen, so we continued southward to Port au Port Bay, knowing that there were settlers there from whom supplies might be purchased. And the interminable head wind rose up again and forced us to the unending windward work once more. We got inside the bay, one reef in our mainsail, and when the wind lost a little of its weight, Nielsen shook out the reef. Unfortunately, he overlooked one reef point and when the wind took hold of the sail it was ripped for half a dozen feet. Then, while we sewed on it, it fell calm and there was a heavy downpour of cold rain. Wet, miserable, and in the worst possible humor, we sat on deck plying the needle in the hard, soaking canvas. Not until the next morning, with a cold northerly wind behind us, did we get to Head Harbor, at the very bottom of Port au Port Bay.

The low, rolling shores showed no sign of human life save a narrow red slash of road appearing and disappearing among the low, wind-gnarled trees. If we followed the road, we reasoned, it would in the end lead us somewhere, but the theory was discouraging, for "somewhere" might be so far away that we would not be able to carry any quantity of groceries back. But it had to be tried. Robbie and I landed with the kayak after a solid hour of hard work at towing a

cod line so that the second man would be able to get to the beach.

The road was muddy and though there were fresh tracks in it we met no one for more than an hour, nor did we see any sign of house or hut. Then, when we were just about to give up and go in the opposite direction, we met a pair of girls. They were about fifteen years old, dumpy in shape with their short, thick skirts and rough sweaters. They were bare-foot and wore no hats. At first they were so frightened of us that they all but turned to run, then, realizing, I suppose, that we were too close to be fled, they put on a bold front and faced us, giggling hysterically. We asked about settlements and grocery stores and all they did was snicker and push each other.

Finally Robbie could stand it no longer.

"Answer, you fools!" he shouted. "We want to know where we can buy some food and if you don't know, tell us where there are people living!"

They sobered at once and said the nearest settlement was sixteen miles away; as to people, there were scattered houses a few miles farther on. Then, frightened and bashful as ever, they turned from us and ran, their bare legs flying and their heavy skirts lifting to show baggy flannel drawers, rather dirty.

As we plodded through the mud, it seemed we went more than a few miles and we were just on the point of deciding the girls had fooled us when we came to a fence with an unpainted house beyond. An old lady with gray-streaked black hair, swarthy weathered skin, and canny black eyes was try-

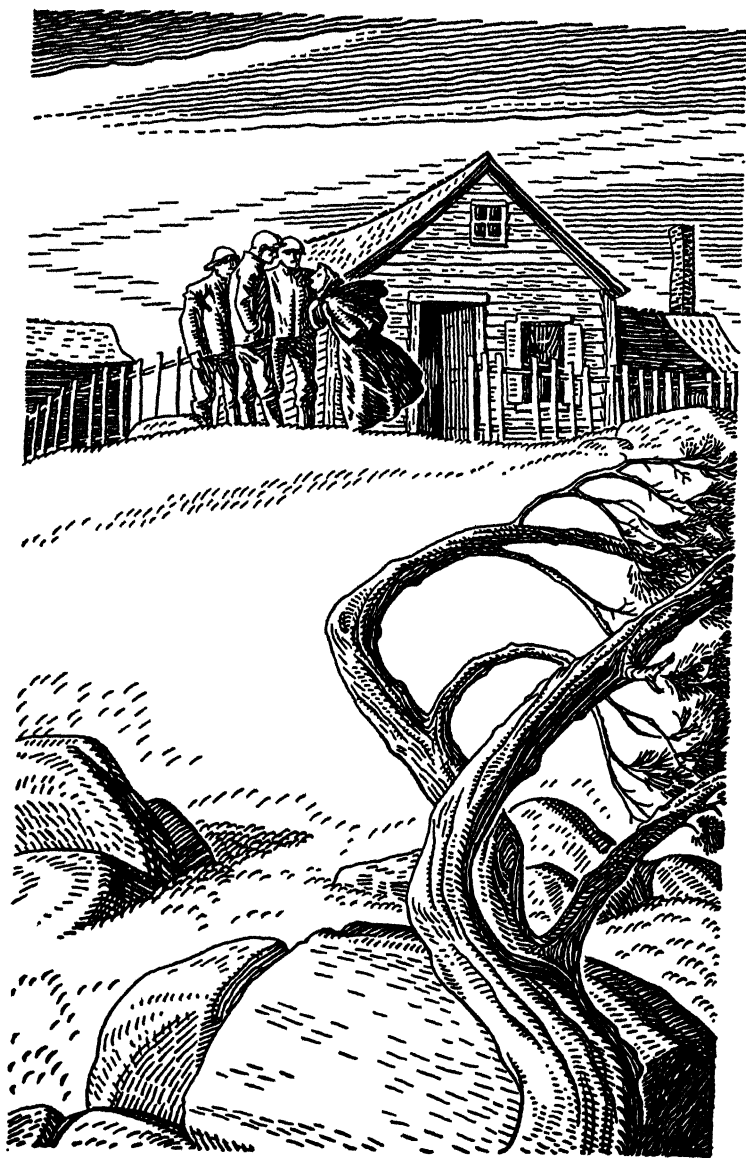
ing to catch a pig. We accosted her and there she stood, squinting and peering at us, clucking softly to herself and uncertain as to whether she should speak. At length she did and then with a strong French accent; she asked if we were "seamens." We said we were, and she invited us into her house; the poor old witch was toothless and, in profile, it seemed that her nose was going to touch her chin.

She clucked to herself and paid little attention to anything we said, being apparently too excited to listen and understand that we wanted to buy bread. Presently, she put before us cups of tea, and a loaf. "Here," she said with satisfaction; "eat!" We ate and the old woman rambled on about how sorry she felt for the "poor seamens out on the sea." She had a big lantern and whenever it blew hard, though it was three in the morning and freezing cold, she went down to the shore and there on a post she hung the light, said a prayer, and scampered back to bed. Her father had been a deserter from a French man-of-war; her husband had been a Newfoundlander; both, somehow or other, had been drowned.

We finally made her understand that we wanted bread to take aboard and she wrapped a loaf for us. "I'm sorry it's not more," she said. "On'y I can't afford to give 'way but this bit. Take it an' welcome."

We laughed; she thought we were begging. And then we set to work to make her understand that we would pay for the loaves. We showed her money and she became too confused to speak for a while, but in the end she said she would go to baking at once. She also said there was another farm a little farther on and there we would be able to get more bread and perhaps some molasses and salt pork and potatoes.





We found the second farm and in it there was a pale, black-haired woman with big, dark eyes and a prodigious number of children, all barefooted and barelegged despite the raw autumn winds. She was sewing on a small machine when we arrived and she called her husband, a pale, worried man, to talk with us. We explained our case and they said they had heard there was a boat in Piccadilly, as, for some reason, they called Head Harbor; the word is a corruption of Pic à Denis. They consulted and said bread could be made and there would be half a barrel of salt pork as well as molasses which could be spared. There could be a bag of potatoes.

The farmer's wife, when she talked, spoke so rapidly it was difficult to understand her and she sounded waspish and full of hate. "I'm not from here. Don't you think it! I'm an American and whatever made me fool enough to come to this country I don't know. It's the worst place on earth." Her husband averted his gaze as she began; apparently he knew by heart every word she was going to say. "Look at us! Look! The children barefoot, no sugar, the land so cold and stony you can't grow things in it. And thieves! We talk about having grafting politicians in the States, but we do get roads and schools out of what they leave. Here we are taxed and taxed and taxed and we get nothing. They steal every bit of it. You saw that road! Would you believe civilized people lived here? And the kids have no place to go to school; I try to teach them something, but I've not got enough learning to go far with them. Newfoundland! I hate it! I hate it! I HATE IT!"

Her husband listened dumbly; he was afraid of her. "It's

true, what she's tellin' you," he admitted. "It's all true; this is the worst country in the world, and it could be all right if it was run good. Do you think America will ever take it away from England? If it was run right we could live, but not with these thieves and taxes."

We said we did not know, but as we looked through the window at the bleak landscape it seemed to us that here was a country no one would covet.

"Look what happens wherever the Americans come," the man went on. "Look at Humber Arm there in the Bay of Islands. Before it was like this—everybody poor and wretched-like, and wondering every winter how they was to pull through. And then, along come the Americans and up go mills and machines and land is bought and *paid for*, too, and big wages is paid and there folks are living like princes and whole forests is cut down and mashed into paper and sent to New York. It's wonderful."

This was before 1929, so Robbie and I nodded our heads to everything, not knowing what was truth and what was not, but very sorry that the kids should be barefoot in such weather. And we drank the tea the woman gave us and ate the bread, marvelous and fluffy with rich yellow butter on it, for the family had a cow.

From this place we went to other houses and got a little butter and, at one house, some sugar; everybody seemed glad to get some of the money MacMillan had loaned us. And when we got back to the house of the people who were in a revolutionary mood there was a team and wagon ready to transport us and our provisions to the landing. The farmer's wife promised to make more ready and it was arranged

that next day we would anchor off this house to get the things and also to water.

At the beach a heavy sea was pounding the shore and, beyond, the *Dolphin* was rolling and wallowing in it. "Can you get aboard in that thing?" the farmer demanded. We said we could and, having helped us unload our supplies, he left us. But we soon found that we would be unable to launch the kayak in the sea that was running. We howled and shouted for Niels and at last he poked his head out the cabin. Conversation was impossible, so with a burned match we scratched a message on a piece of driftwood; we put it in the kayak along with some food and signaled Niels to pull it out. Light, the kayak arrived safely and Niels waved to indicate that he understood.

And there we were in that cold, wet place, the rude north wind buffeting us, and nowhere to sleep. But the farmer had said something about an abandoned lumberjack's cabin up a side path, and after an hour or so we found it; it was a big log house in bad repair, but it kept out the wind and there was a pile of hay in one corner. The roof over the hay looked tight and we carried some food to the cabin, made a fire on the old gasoline drum, and cooked a big meal. It was a wild, eerie place and the evergreens moaned disconsolately in the wind, but the fire held back all the devils of the outer darkness and, having eaten and talked a great deal, we buried ourselves in the hay and slept soundly until morning.

The wind had moderated and it was just possible to effect the kayak work necessary to get us aboard. By the time it had been done it was noon, so we waited until the morning after to go around to our farmer friend's anchorage for water

and the remainder of our purchases. There was a northwest wind blowing and we did all that was to be done in his dory, thanked him, paid him, hoped things would improve for him, and started to sea, beating as usual.

It would be monotonous to set down in detail the series of setbacks and abuses we were now accorded by the gray autumnal sea. Up to this point we had always managed to get farther ahead on our course no matter what happened; now we found ourselves losing ground, being driven back to the northward. We blew out our jib that night and kept off the beach long enough to get back into harbor only by tying the rags of it together with numerous bights of heavy line. We mended the rotten canvas and left again; no sooner did we clear the entry point of Port au Port Bay than the wind piped up with great snow squalls. While we fought the mainsail, one of us fell on the compass, another kicked it, and it was completely smashed and ruined. The snow was blinding and the wind rose to gale force, making us heave to even though we knew there was land close to leeward and had no idea of the direction of our drift. The deck was white and the flying spray soaked the blanket of snow, reducing it to a dangerous slush in which there was no footing. When daylight came we were drifting parallel to the shore and not very far from the Bay of Islands.

A compass we had to have, and in Humber Arm we thought we could buy one; in no other place would it be possible.

So once more, a week after our first attempt to enter, we stood into the Bay of Islands and found it a different world.

Tall Mt. Blow-Me-Down was covered with snow. All the

steep hills were blanketed and at their feet nestled little villages, cozy, quiet, and with smoke rising, blue and domestic, from their chimneys. It was winter, even though we were still in the third week of October month. It is a beautiful place, the Bay of Islands, but not many people ever go there.

In Humber Arm, we found a dock and also a trolley line which went to the village a couple of miles away. And in the village there was not a compass to be had; we had to telegraph to St. John's for one and spend the next four days idling about and waiting. We were languidly accused of being rum runners by a customs patrol boat, but managed to be so overbearing and insolent that her commander let us alone. We went to a tiny theater and saw a dreary movie. Afterwards a fat man with an earnest expression and a rich brogue stood on the minute stage and delivered long recitations which celebrated, unconvincingly, the military virtues of the Irish race. The audience, being composed of the descendants of Basque fishermen, deserters from French men-of-war, deserters from English men-of-war, American fishermen's by-blows, exiled Scots, and Irish settlers, cheered him as lustily as if they had all been pure-blooded descendants of one or the other of the several ethnic groups called Irish. Afterwards we got in the trolley and we were alone save for a group of five Labrador fishermen at the far end. These were doing their best to celebrate their return the month before from the season's fishing, but the only facilities were those provided by the recitationist and the jolty little trolley. They were vaguely dissatisfied and sad; in the end, they began to sing chanteys of the fishing vessels.

Only one do I remember and of that but a rag of verse and chorus:

"Oh, skipper, sir, take in some sail,  
Or we'll all be lost in this heavy gale."  
"Take in be damned!" says he to we.  
"I'll show you how our ship can sail."

Chorus

She's heading up for Cape Mugford now,  
She's flinging the spray from her weather bow,  
Down falls a squall from the angry sky,  
Our little ship . . . something or other, something  
or other——

I cannot recall another word of that long, dolorous song. Their voices were hoarse and melancholy and when we got out at the end of the line they paid another fare and rode back to the village, singing without conviction and struggling, poor devils, to make themselves believe they were roistering and having a great deal of fun.

And it was at this place that there came aboard the *Dolphin* a sinister old prophet of disaster to whom we gave the name of Bodies-on-the-Beach. He had watery blue eyes, a scrawny neck, a drooping, tobacco-stained mustache; he had a thin, melancholy voice, a distant, cynical laugh, and a ghoul-ish sense of humor. He fitted perfectly into the frame of our world, this world of contrary winds, three-times-a-week gales, accidents, snow, cold bunks, and a growing conviction that, try as we would, we would never get the *Dolphin* to Nova Scotia.

Old Bodies-on-the-Beach had done some small-boat sail-

ing in his fishing days. The voyages had been uniformly disastrous. Again and again he had deserted little fishing ships when far from home and then had had his judgment vindicated when they foundered with all hands. The bodies of the unfortunate mariners who had not followed his prudent example were invariably discovered, along with the wreckage, a day or two later, smashed and frozen in the surf of the rock-bound coast. "Lost with all hands," "frozen to death," "killed by the main boom," "washed overboard by a sea," "broke up on the ledge and dropped back into the deep water," "never heard of again," "killed," "drowned," "frozen," "reported missing," and always, always, "their bodies were found on the beach"—with such cheery items did his conversation bristle, and when he got so bad we wanted to scream and drive him from the cabin he advised us to lay our schooner up.

"Put her ashore here, byes. You can take the train to Port aux Basques. The steamer visits it and in a jiffy she'll have you in Nova Scotia. Then you're safe—all the way back to the States in the iron horse. It'll be cheap, byes; cheaper than sailing this thing back. Why, she can capsize, she's that shallow."

We denied all of it and finally got rid of him. But he must have told the truth in his stories, for I have been in there three times since and each time he has come aboard and told the selfsame yarns, varying not a hair's breadth from the versions I heard aboard the *Dolphin*. He has never recognized me, for I do not think he sees faces as he relates his dread occurrences; I once had the grisly experience of listen-



ing to him describe my own death, a rash boy frozen and full of water because he was headstrong.

Our compass came on the train and, looking at the railroad tracks, I thought how easy it would be to lay up the *Dolphin* and go home as Bodies-on-the-Beach had recommended. There would have been no loss of face; perfectly good seamen had advised us to do so. But I could not make the admission that the *Dolphin*, my first boat, was unable to keep the sea. I could not bear the thought of her lying under snow on a Newfoundland gravel beach, saying to all who passed, as plainly as though she had borne a sign: "My owner left me because he was a man of little faith and less kidney." The *Dolphin* might let us down, but I certainly was not going to let her down.

Three days of westerly gales, cold and wicked, held us in Humber Arm and then we sailed; the hills were snow-clad, the water was leaden. We cleared the Bay of Islands and with a quartering breeze we laid out for Cape St. George. About half-way to it, however, the wind died away and it became calm. The sea was smooth, and soon dense white fog grew up and shrouded us from the world. There we lay on the water as if suspended in timeless space, and after a while snow fell, big white flakes that fluttered down to the sea and disappeared, but, striking our decks, flourished and built themselves into a three-inch blanket of grim beauty.

Niels and I were in the cockpit and, taken by I know not what new aberration, I asked him what he would do did he own the *Dolphin*. And promptly he said he would put her on a steamer's deck and take her to Denmark. There he would

use her to carry bricks and firewood up and down the Baltic; he would make, he affirmed, a good living. So, generously, I told Niels that in Chester I would make him a present of the *Dolphin*. He seemed fairly well pleased.

This sudden promise was no more rational than anything else that had been said, or done, or planned on this non-sensical voyage and I heard myself with amazement. Then I went forward and sat in the snow to think about it. Nielsen would own the *Dolphin* and I would have to get another ship. I would have a larger one with a good engine. It would be possible to stand up in her cabin and she would have an easy motion in a seaway. She would be superlatively beautiful and with her I would go . . . At this moment a snowball hit me in the middle of the back and, turning, I beheld Robbie, just out of the cabin and in a frolicsome mood. We were all throwing snowballs and looking like a Christmas card when the snow suddenly turned to rain and made a ghastly slush wallow of the deck.

The easterly wind came up with it, though, strong and dirty, and we drove along before it, glad of the rain, for it kept the water smooth. We passed Cape St. George in the evening and we were fairly flying, the schooner getting her canvas walked to her as never since the day we carried away the fore gaff jaws. And that night, somewhere off Bay St. George, she leaped through the crest of a sea and fell flat on her belly into the trough of the next one. Niels and I charged out on deck under the impression that she had taken the ground, although we knew it to be impossible.

"We've got to take the mainsail off her!" Robbie shouted.

"The wind is backing and a big swell is coming out of the west."

Hastily we reduced her to the whole foresail and by the time it was done, the wind was breathing from the north-west.

By daylight we were under a reefed foresail, jogging in a whole gale, and drifting toward Cape Anguille, on the south shore of Bay St. George, unable to clear it.

For two days we drifted under this patch of canvas. When we got close to the southern shore, we wore around and drifted back to the northern side of the bay. Back and forth we moved, sagging ever deeper into that wide gash in the Newfoundland coast and cursing it for its lack of harbors; at its very head, thirty miles in, there was St. George Harbor, but thirty miles was a long way; it was too much to lose. Long ago we had dropped that trick of holding the tiller while hove to; now we lashed it hard a-lee and left the *Dolphin* to take care of herself. Interminably we rose and fell, listening to the seas fling their white manes across the foredeck, and living in clammy misery. It seemed that we had been for years battling against head winds and gales in an effort to round capes and clear straits.

And on my watch, my head out the companion, I would think that a flick of the wrists would slack the foresheet and put the tiller up so that the *Dolphin* would go romping before her foe to that harbor at the head of the bay, and there we could lay her up. Then a train. A steamer. Another train. And home. There would be hot food, good; there would be deep, warm beds. There would be baths, which, as I remem-

bered vaguely, had been a pleasant custom. There would be many things, none of them related to this frantic life of fury and cold. And then a biting lash of freezing spray would slap me across the face and I would begin to plot ingenious little dodges to get her past Cape Anguille. "Just give me a few yards clear of that cape," I beseeched the northwest storm. "Just a few yards. Then you can blow harder if you like. There's a bargain for you! You let me get around the cape, a matter of less than four miles, and I'll let you blow even harder, if you can. Isn't that fair? What's wrong with it?" And so I stood in that companion, trying to barter with a gale of wind, devising shrewd offers which could not fail to arouse its avarice, and telling myself that, if it would only accept, I would cheat and sneak into Port aux Basques.

The storm had no instinct for business, it seemed, but before I let myself be convinced I played the trump card. "See here," I said, "I know I haven't been perfectly frank with you. I was planning to duck into Port aux Basques. All right, I'll put my cards on the table; you let me get into Port aux Basques and *I'll lay her up.*" Then, afraid that this might not be enough, I threw in the rest: "And, to boot, I'll let you give me all you've got between Cape Anguille and Cape Ray." I folded my arms in the manner of one who has made the ultimate concession, and went below.

I picked up Bowditch and began to read a chapter on "The Day's Work."

But the gale must have been examining my proposal. Some meteorological steering committee decided to consider the facts and came to the conclusion that the best interests of

northwest gales, in general, would be served by letting the schooner round Cape Anguille and proceed to Port aux Basques for honorable surrender. My parole was accepted and the wind died rapidly.

By late afternoon, a light southerly wind was all that remained and the sea was smooth save for a decreasing swell.

A schooner, a good-sized one too, of perhaps eighty tons, rounded the cape, all her kites set, and with the breeze she fanned along the coast, bound for St. George Harbor. The setting sun shone, ruddy, on her white sails and we envied her the free wind. We thought how fine to be in a vessel that size, able to work to windward in bad weather and no toy of wind and wave as we were. We were still comparing the wretchedness of our lot with the splendor of life aboard an eighty-tonner when the day ended. We would have felt differently had we known that that same schooner was to be driven ashore with the loss of half her crew within twenty-four hours.

The sky was crystalline blue and when night fell the stars came out, brilliant and twinkling, more, it seemed, than they had ever twinkled before. The wind from the south backed to southeast; a faint air, it was, no more. And the sky began to murk over; the stars were obscured in a fashion so gradual that you did not notice. Then the air came to east and grew to be a light breeze, a current of air that seemed to breathe because it would be almost still and then fill the sails quietly, only to die before the schooner got way on her. By midnight the wind was established in the northeast and it was moderate; the sky was completely overcast and the lighthouse on Anguille gave forth an unnaturally bright flash.

"What's the course?" Niels called. "I got her sailing again."

I put the old "blue back" chart on the table and stood the lantern on it, partly to see it and partly to hold it flat. There were Cape Anguille, Cape Ray, St. Paul Island, and Nova Scotia laid out in the yellow light. My old courses were on it and the marks where I had erased the courses of the fishing captain who had owned the chart before he gave it to me.

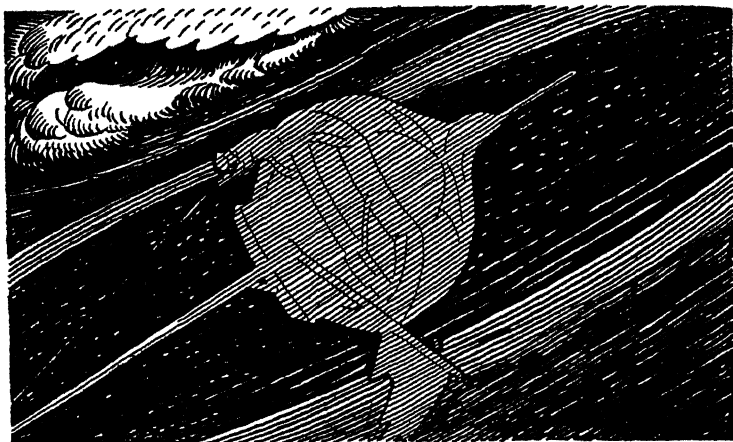
I studied it awhile and then placed the parallel rules on it and with them I drew a course to Cape Ray. So I had promised the northwest gale. It was not far away, the cape, and by early forenoon we would be inside, the voyage ended. But there lay Cabot Strait under my hand and it seemed narrow, for a fair wind was behind us. I laid out another course for Ingonish Harbor in Nova Scotia or, rather, Cape Breton Island. It was not far—fifty-odd miles; allow six knots; that would be less than nine hours to reach harbor on the other side of the strait and there we could lie, snug and safe, until the dirt obviously about to start had got through with its worst; after that, the Bras d'Or Lakes and, bit by bit, to Chester.

I remembered the parole I had given the northwester. I had promised it that, if I got by Anguille all right, I would go to Port aux Basques and deliver myself up in honorable surrender. The proposal had been accepted. But now, with a fair wind commencing to snore in the rigging, I laughed at myself for the absurd thing I had done; making bargains with a parcel of steep isobaric gradients! As bad as an Eskimo. No, let her go.

I put my head out the companion and spoke to Niels.

"Let her go SW $\frac{1}{4}$ W," I said. "I'm going to put her into Ingonish until this blow is over."

I watched until he had winged her out. Then I went below. I blew out the lantern, lay down, and fell asleep almost at once.



## BEANS AND BUTTER ON THE OVERHEAD

AT DAYBREAK, the wind was still steady and true in the northeast, although it had gained somewhat in force. But, running, we did not feel it much and the sea was not large, for we were still protected by the coast. The sky was a mass of low, dark gray clouds, jumbled together in heavy masses and, if they were without order, they lacked nothing of definition; their edges were hard and sharply outlined against the wrack above. The coast of Newfoundland was plain on our port quarter, rugged, snowy, and somber in the steely light; Cape Ray was abeam, distant ten miles. There remained only the barest chance of fighting back to it and into Port aux Basques; we did not take it and I had no



regrets. The wind was in her sails and the rigging all a-tauto—Lord God, let her go!

And He did.

Slowly the wind rose. Slowly the seas gained in bulk and steepness; they commenced to break. We deprived her of both jib and mainsail, for she was commencing to bury forward and she yawed badly. Reducing sail made her drier and made her steer better, but the wind seemed stronger than it had been.

It began to snow. Not the big, playful flakes that had given us fun a few days before in a calm, but hard, tightly frozen particles, fine, that cut the face and hands. It gathered in small heaps in any lee it could find; otherwise it drove on ahead of us and it was as bad as fog, for it blotted out everything. The sea had been gaining with each moment and now it was very big, uncouth and dreadful, as it flung itself out of the white pall in drunken snatches at our ship. She rushed on, surprisingly dry, but we took no pleasure in it, for there was that in this wind which made us believe it different from any other the *Dolphin* had experienced. It reached an incredible force almost impossible to face and I said to myself: "Well, harder than this it cannot blow; we are still doing well, so it is all right." And then, within an hour it had far outdone the ferocity which had given me the thought that now it could be no worse, and once more I stated flatly: "This is the ultimate; wind can blow no faster; the sea can be no worse." But it could; in less than an hour it was.

Niels and I were eating biscuits and oatmeal when Robbie called to us.

"There in the snow!" he shouted. "Something dark! Land,

maybe. No—more to starboard.” We saw him, gigantic and legendary, through the wraiths of driving snow, waving a big, mittened hand into the void. It was a brief rift and we saw through it St. Paul Island; we hurtled past with only occasional glimpses. But it gave a fix and carefully I laid the course for the bell buoy off Ingonish Harbor. Two and a half hours of such sailing and we would sight it; then, into the haven, down with our now reefed foresail, and safe, safe from this impossible wind, safe from the appalling sea at which none of us had longer the courage to look. We guessed harder at time than we ever had before.\* Stop too soon and we would not see it. Run too far and, if we missed it, there would be those white fangs slaving at the cliffs where we would strike.

And when we agreed we must have gone far enough, there was nothing to be seen in the snow and we rounded up and hove her to under the reefed foresail.

It was only then that we realized the full fury of the cataclysm in which we were lost.

Our drift was about south and the snow ceased. But that helped us not at all, for in its place there was now a layer of spindrift through which nothing could be seen. The seas no longer grew in magnitude, rather they decreased, for they were being flattened out and blown away in flying masses by that terrible wind.

The foresail was too much for her, and we dropped the gaff and lashed it to the mast, scandalizing it as we had in Tikkerachook.

And it was still too much for her. Again and again we had

\* It seems impossible that we had no timepiece and I can hardly believe it myself; nevertheless, that's my recollection of the matter.

heard that high cabin house called dangerous and mistaken for a deckload; now we saw why. The house was high and therefore the foresail, immediately over it, was also high. And the force exerted by the gale against the patch of scandalized foresail converted the mast into a deadly lever with which we were to be capsized.

The wind blew us over on our side, so that the water poured into those deep, open cockpits. It happened twice and pumping was not enough; we had to bail.

Plainly, plainly we saw she could not live under it.

There could have been a sea anchor, but only by destroying one of our three sails and thereby abandoning the possibility of sailing in any direction save more or less before the wind after the gale had passed. Also, we did not know how she would behave with a sea anchor. But we did know how she would run; we could let her off before it and, stern to, she would drift before the sea longer than she could live under the topheavy foresail.

We got the compass down from the deck where it was twirling like a roulette wheel. It had been a dry compass, although we had ordered a liquid one, and we had put kerosene in it to steady the card. But so wild was our motion that the compass leaked every bit of the liquid and became quite useless. We filled it with sea water and looked at it. As well as we could tell, the wind was more northerly now and, running, we could clear Scatari and drive out to sea. If the compass held in our hands, over two tons of iron ballast, was not telling the truth, there could be no saying where we would fetch up. If on the shore, we hoped the low, sandy coast between Sydney and the Bras d'Or Lakes. If not, we would be

match sticks at the base of a cliff. Heaving to under the mainsail was impossible; it was rotten and would not have stood thirty seconds in that wind. But the wind was backing more, the compass indicated we had a chance and——

The *Dolphin* made up our minds for us; she nearly capsized. She was blown over completely on her side and her lee deck went under and the sea poured in. We thought it was the end and we stared at it stupidly, feeling nothing, seeing nothing, and thinking nothing. But she stood up again and we rushed out, without pumping and bailing, to get that foresail off her before it killed us all.

I took the tiller and Robbie and Niels, like gnomes, slow and clumsy, but sure, went to lower the sail. They took the lashings off the gaff and, released, it struck Niels; reeling, he was flung out past the rigging and down to the water. Robbie seized his coat and, helpless at the tiller, I watched them battle, their movements as slow as those of deep-sea divers, as Niels fought to prevent himself from going over the side and Robbie exerted his balance of power, for without that grip on his back Niels would have been in the sea and lost.

At last he got back and I saw him nod briefly to Robbie, avoiding his eyes. And watching the drama of two men who hated each other so that they had not spoken for more than a month, though they lived cheek by jowl, I let my attention lapse for a split second and she yawed. As she commenced, I knew it was coming and I screamed to them to watch out for the foreboom. With a crash it swept across the deck, dragging the madly fluttering sail and gaff with it, and it struck Robbie across the back, flinging him to his knees. He clutched frantically for a hold on something and, not find-

ing it, would certainly have gone over the side had not Nielsen grabbed his arm and jerked him close to the mast.

And now, as they fought the foresail down, each of them avoided the eyes of the other.

In a few minutes we were under bare poles and running. I do not know what virtue it is the Tancook model possesses, but it will run in any weather. With a different type of boat it would have been suicidal, but not with one of these; running, she was drier and no longer were we in terror of capsizing.

The seas were not great; as I have said, the wind had flattened them down; but they possessed an awful power and it was horrifying to gaze astern for more than a moment. I stood at that tiller wondering what course we were following and praying that she might not broach. Each sea hurled itself savagely under the counter and then, nose down at a steep angle, we would be flung forward at a shocking pace, coming level at the moment the sea burst and exploded beside us; then the forward rush would slacken and we would hang trembling while the schooner awaited the next blow but a second away. It was easier on the nerves, for we were active; I was at the tiller and Robbie and Niels were bailing with a bucket; the seas, as they rode past towered high and ghostly in the spindrift on either side and often crashed in on us, spilling their tops into the cockpits in a white lather, cold and bitter.

Icebergs, I have noted, may be symbols of absolutes; that storm was another symbol, a symbol for the absolute of insensate fury. It is customary at this point in an account of a great storm at sea to say that it was "indescr-

able," and there is much truth in the assertion. Even the sailing directions use the word in speaking of full-fledged storms. And here, I think, is the reason for much seafaring, especially for the kind that is conducted in small boats. From the experience of such dreadful chaos there is a catharsis obtainable from no possible work of art. For me—and I am sure for the others too—in the flying *Dolphin*, her very presence on the surface not predictable even for seconds into the future, there was the coexistence of the uttermost extreme of terror side by side with the wildest elation. We were completely pulled out of our bodies, wrenched away from our normal mentalities and exposed, naked, to the wave on wave of sound and violence, the shrieking crescendos that were but the foundations on which were raised super-crescendos. And there stood our mortal persons, oilskinned and clumsy, so that they looked like gnomes, striving to keep themselves from being destroyed with every artifice and instinct six months in the vessel had taught. I write that the coexistence of abysmal terror and god-like elation is responsible for much seafaring, especially the small-boat kind, and so it is; the survivor feels that, if he can design and build the perfect vessel, there will be no terror and only that tremendous thrill. Hence the buckets of drawing ink and the miles of timber that go every year into the building of small sea-going yachts, accompanied always by more money than their owners can afford, and it must make an economic determinist feel like a fool.

For no good reason the wind eased for a few minutes and the sea grew horrible, for it was no longer compressed and the layer of spindrift was dissipated, letting us see, for the

first time, the face of the wrath before which we fled. It was terrible to look upon and we averted our faces.

But ahead there was worse.

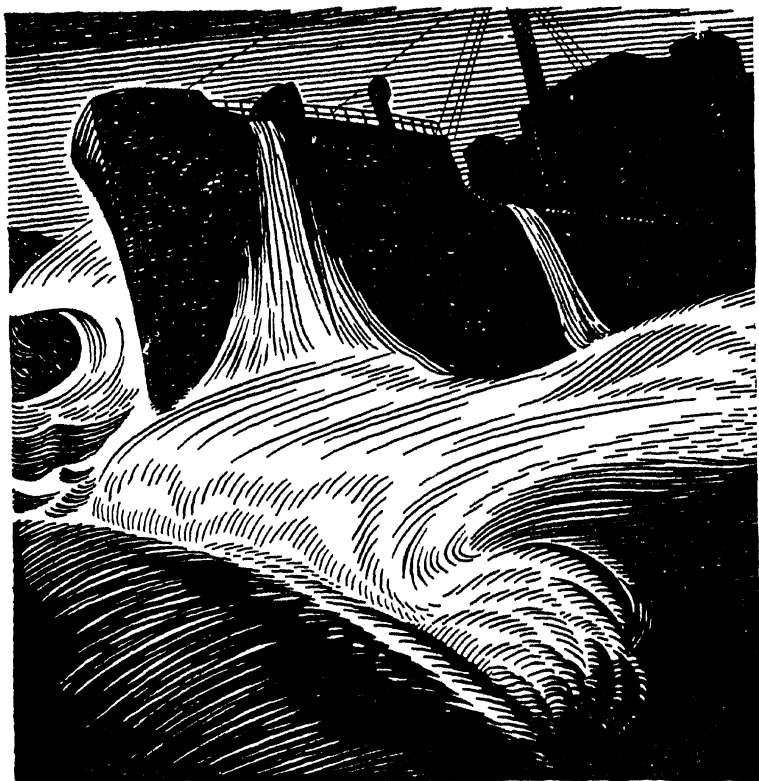
A great steel ship, her high bows looming in the murk, was crossing our path and we were powerless to alter our course or change our fate in the least. The smoke was being blown from her stack and no one was to be seen. Her mast-head lights, yellow, glowed high above her. And toward inevitable meeting with the monster we rode certain that, now, here was destruction.

It was Robbie who realized first. He began to shout to me and I could not hear him. He put his mouth to Nielsen's ear and I could see that he was bellowing something. Niels watched the rapidly nearing steamer closely and then nodded. Robbie leaped back to my side. "She's hove to!" he screamed thinly, his voice all but lost in the tumult.

And a splendid inspiration came to me.

"Soak a pillow in kerosene! Tie it to a stick! Light it! We'll flare her and then get a line and we can lie safe under her lee until the gale ends!"

Robbie nodded comprehension and then there were the two of them down in the cabin, one holding a pillow as if it were alive and struggling, while the other poured kerosene on it. Robbie tied it quickly to a stick, lit it and, in a great yellow burst of flame, the flare emerged from the cabin and illuminated our decks, for it was almost night. We were close to the steamer, her bow towering high above us and, lit up as we were, we swept before her, passing not a hundred yards away from the sharp steel stem which would have crushed us had not the storm forced her to lay to.



We watched the bridge for some sign we were seen and my arm was ready to fling the tiller to port and shoot the *Dolphin* into the shelter of that four-hundred-foot wall of steel. But not a sign came from her; the bridge might have been the abiding place of the gloomy and indifferent gods of this howling nether world, so aloof was it.

The kerosene burned out and the pillow blew away in a flurry of burning feathers; the steamer was swallowed by the





darkness as the wind renewed itself. Probably the center of the cyclonic storm had passed over us. The wind must have shifted, but we did not know it, for the compass was utterly unmanageable.

Now I was too exhausted to stand at the tiller longer, and Niels took my place while I went below to rest. But rest was impossible, for the tops of the sea, spilling into those open cockpits, kept us in danger of filling and we had to struggle

with the buckets. I bailed and Robbie emptied them over the side.

It was while we were doing this, and wondering whether we could continue until the storm had been spent, that the schooner took charge and arranged herself to her own liking. We felt a tremendous yaw that flung us to our knees and then, as I lay struggling in the foot of water on the cabin floor, the howl of the wind rose so high it all but disappeared and a new motion came, long, sweeping, easy, and there was no more water coming into the cockpits. Outside, I could hear Robbie shouting to Niels. In a moment his face appeared in the cabin, surprised and unbelieving.

"Come out!" he cried. "Come out and look. She yawed, so Niels ran her up and she's lying like a duck."

And it was true. She had got away from him, and with the lightning-like reaction of the good sailor he was Niels had flung the helm hard down and the *Dolphin* had spun to meet her enemy. It seemed a miracle; not one of us had known that she could actually heave to under bare poles; we had supposed that, without canvas, she would lie in the trough like a half-tide rock until she foundered. But here she was, safe and buoyant, five points off the wind, and I attribute it to her schooner rig; the wind pressure on the mainmast being well aft tended to make a weathervane of her and so forced her up to the sea. I doubt if any other rig would have behaved similarly.

We watched for nearly an hour, but no solid water came aboard and though we did not know where we were drifting and were powerless to control our course, we were safe, it seemed, from immediate annihilation. Realization of our

weariness came. All standing, we dropped in our bunks, if not to sleep, at least to rest.

For me, it was not sleep but a series of malignant dreams, wherein I thought myself to be in a harbor but dragging anchor, as gusts of hurricane velocity swept the port. The rigging was screaming and when at last the anchor ceased to hold entirely and the dream schooner headed for the fangs of a foaming ledge, I awoke in the gale-racked *Dolphin*, but the rigging's scream was constant and after a while it became so that I did not know for sure when I was asleep and when I was awake, for in both states I was in a dreadful storm. True sleep I had none, and Robbie and Niels later confessed to having been in a similar case.

Toward morning, I was awakened by a new motion, less easy, and by the slapping of spray against the kayak, which still was with us; poking my head out, I found that the wind had moderated somewhat and the *Dolphin* was falling off into the trough of the big sea. Had I not seen and felt the wind of the afternoon and night before, I should have been overwhelmed at facing the gale now blowing, but by contrast it seemed almost kindly, a shouting old bully not to be taken seriously. And to keep our head up without calling the others, I reefed the mainsail, set it, dropped its gaff, and left it scandalized. Once more she pointed up and was dry, but to prevent the sail from blowing away we had to pass lines around it later.

During the morning the wind lost its strength and we had to raise the gaff. The atmosphere cleared, the sea went down, and toward noon two steamers passed close aboard, almost within hailing distance. Did we talk of abandoning, and

signaling one of them? We did not. We told each other that we now had the situation in hand, that we had ridden out the worst the Western Ocean had, and would yet get her to Nova Scotia before quitting.

Not long after the steamers passed, we judged we could carry sail and the compass was brought out on deck and fastened in place again. We did not know where we were, but felt that a northwest course would take us in to the land, wherever it was, so up went her canvas and we plodded in from the sea. In the afternoon we saw a large two-masted schooner also making for the land and the sight gave us a good deal of confidence.

But, not long after, the breeze shifted to the southeast and there were blinding rain squalls which brought with them an increasing wind. By nightfall we were hove to under the scandalized mailsail in a violent southeast storm. Nielsen came below from a long spell of watching the gale and, shaking the sea water from his yellow beard, he muttered whimsically: "The sea is like mountains—go look." It was a much bigger sea than the one which had nearly destroyed us the night before, but it was much longer in proportion to its somewhat greater height and we rode it easily, drifting in toward the coast.

At ten o'clock that night we sighted a lighthouse.

Here is where the folly of inadequate navigating equipment laid us by the heels. If, for a few cents, we had provided ourselves with a *Light List*, we would have been able to recognize the flash, despite the heaving of the sea and the misty horizon. But we had not known that such a publication existed; indeed, we would have started with a map torn from

a school geography book had not the old "blue back" shown me how good a real chart could be. And there we were, staring at a light that marked a harbor entrance or a headland from which a harbor could have been reached, and we had a fair wind toward it. But we dared not run for it; what would have been a friend if we had been able to identify it was a mortal enemy, for the light marked the lee shore.

"Wear her round on the other tack," I ordered. "We must have sea room."

Wearing altered our drift by several points and the wind commenced to veer to southwest. By daylight it was blowing a moderate southwesterly gale and the great ocean sea had begun to give place to a shorter, higher one. Land lay low to starboard.

At this point it was discovered that a good portion of our fresh water supply was lost by the spigot's having been broken off the breaker which stood in the cockpit. And, with little water and little food, we began to drift away from the land, making twelve points' leeway. Somewhere in the low, dark coastline there was a haven where we could lie at anchor and, powerless, we had to watch it slowly disappear. Once we got sail on and tried to drive her through the confused cross sea, but she almost broke in two. Already she was leaking badly and we dared not strain her further.

The land dipped and a new, steep, southwest sea built up, driven by the moderate southwest gale.

We were cheerful, unnaturally so. The big winds had died to a mere moderate gale and the sea, heavy though it was, was nothing compared to what we had already survived. As for the water and fuel situation, we hardly gave it a thought;

in our plans, the southwester would moderate, the sea would go down, and then the apparently invincible, wholly ridiculous *Dolphin* would be sailed under her foresail, tattered jib, and rotten mainsail, up to a port in that coast just beyond the horizon; triumphant and absurd, with one more proof of her uncanny seaworthiness behind her, all the prophets of evil confounded, and my dishonored parole to the god of storms forgotten.

We made a fairly heavy meal that evening and chatted together, all of us friendly and cordial, for, despite the small differences which had seemed so large in that cubicle, we had passed through three days of great gales and each one of us knew the other two were dependable. I still thought Nielsen crotchety and crabby, yet I had seen that he was a man and a sailor, that the ocean had nothing to make him quail; the men who rowed the Viking dragons were probably very like him. Nielsen still thought I was too young and inexperienced for the command of even so small a craft as the *Dolphin*, but he also had seen that, no matter what happened, I would not shirk responsibility, would not proclaim the situation beyond me and dump it in his lap. The boots of command were overlarge for me, but, if I had not learned to wear them gracefully, I at least wore them without stumbling. And despite the enmity between Robbie and Niels there was still the fact that, on the foredeck, when they had striven to take in sail, they had, turn and turn about, saved each other's life. As for the relation between Robbie and me, there had been no discord since we had hunted Niels at Mary's Harbor.

And there we sprawled in the clammy cabin, our bellies

full and the yellow light of the lantern pleasant and cheerful. Outside, the gale roared and screamed; the sky was clear and frigid save for small, fast clouds, like bombs, moving across the face of the brilliant moon. The wind was working around to west.

Robbie told how he had been on a ship during the war and seen the vessel immediately ahead torpedoed; they had skirted her and continued in the line while the convoying destroyers had scurried after the submarine and destroyed her with depth bombs. Then Niels began to tell a very funny story about something that had happened to him while in Buenos Aires. Before it was finished, Robbie got up from his bunk, donned oilskins, and made for the door.

"I'll bet she ships a green one, now," he remarked, ruefully, "just because I am nice and dry."

This seemed a humorous idea to Niels and me, and we laughed immoderately; Robbie, in point of fact, was bound for the old paint bucket which constituted, as I have mentioned, our bad-weather plumbing. He closed the door of the cabin behind him.

I asked Niels more about Buenos Aires. I was lying in my bunk, my head on my hand and looking toward Niels, who was lying on his back, smoking with deep satisfaction a short, curved pipe and eying the overhead speculatively as he yarned. Between us there was the lantern, tied to the table.

Niels interrupted his narrative with a chuckle and turned toward me.

"And you know," he laughed, "they put that Finn aboard with paper seaboots, paper oilskins, and——"

There was a crash against the weather side like the end of the world.

Over we went and my last sight of anything was Niels, his face absurdly blank, coming out of his bunk, as if defying the law of gravitation, smashing the lantern, striking the side of the cabin over my head, and sticking there. The light went out and the sea battered down the door and rushed in. I was pinned to my bunk.

This was the end, and I looked on my death with indifference as though it were something that had happened long ago to another person, of whom I had just heard.

How long we remained in that dark sea-womb I do not know, but it was long enough to realize and accept the fact of death and then become petulant because it was delayed. Thirty seconds, perhaps. Then the *Dolphin* wrenched herself up; I felt it as a quick pressure against my back. Nielsen fell on top of me and then to the floor; an oblong of moonlight shot through the broken cabin doors.

Across the prostrate Nielsen I leaped out on deck.

Robbie stood in the cockpit, puffing like a porpoise and wiping sea water from his face. "I thought I'd been washed overboard," he said stupidly. "I thought I'd gone right over the side."

The *Dolphin* lay in the trough of the sea, heeled over at an angle of thirty degrees from the vertical. The mainsail hung in long tatters and ribbons. The kayak, broken in two, trailed over the side, full of water but held to the rigging by a few lashings. Below, the cabin floor had burst and two tons of pig iron had piled up against my bunk. A foot of water swashed in the cabin.



Niels picked himself off the shattered floor and commenced to shift the ballast back so that she would come to an even keel. Robbie cut the kayak adrift and I threw the tiller hard up and let her off before the rolling seas.

As Robbie cut and hacked, he spat sea water and sobbed out what had happened. "I was just about to come below, when I saw a sea rise up close aboard. It broke clear over us. That's the trouble with the mainsail—it didn't get blown away; it was washed away. And that sea threw the *Dolphin* through the air. I went right under water and when I came up there was nothing in sight. I thought I'd been washed into the bloody ocean and just then I saw the masts come out of the side of a sea and up she popped like a cork. But she was right under and damn near upside down."

Everything he said was verified by evidences within the cabin. Butter and beans, which had been in dishes by the stove, were found smeared on the overhead, on the port side, showing that her masts must have gone down until they were forty degrees from the horizontal below the surface of the sea. The ballast had all piled up against my bunk. The Little Cod was wrenched loose from its fastenings. Our firewood had fallen overboard from the floor of the forward cockpit. Our remaining fresh water had been mixed with salt. The centerboard trunk leaked a steady stream, for it had been shattered by the shifting ballast. Seams had been started.

We were a wreck and running blindly offshore. To heave to under the high foresail, for that we had no stomach, but, standing at the tiller, I had a brilliant idea.

"Cut down the mainsail," I shouted. "We'll make a sea anchor of it."

And Robbie and Niels cut the mass of tatters down. They lashed big pigs of iron ballast to the gaff. They put a bridle to the boom; to this they bent the anchor cable and over the side they flung the thing as I put the helm down and ran her up to meet the snap as the drag took hold. The weighted gaff sank, the boom floated, and the tattered ribbons of canvas bellied out between; we had a sea anchor and it worked.

But the mainmast looked strangely naked.

We found a candle and, after a while, got it lighted and were able to see our condition. It was ghastly. No water. No fuel. Very little food, for the bag of potatoes in the cockpit had gone over the side and all the fresh bread was soaked in sea water. We had left the foresail and the jib, a sail so old and patched and rotten that it would not stand in any but the lightest weather. And we were making water like a basket.

For the first time we were very discouraged and afraid of the sea.

The sea anchor kept our head to the wind and waves, but it allowed us little drift and we were wetter by far than when hove to under canvas. It was a most miserable substitute for the usual method. Heavy seas broke across our decks and came pouring down the smoke stack, putting out the fire we built in the Little Cod with a floor board or two. But each time we relighted it and for fuel we turned to Nielsen's bunk, a requisition which infuriated him. Apparently he thought Robbie and I were cutting up his bunk in preference to our own simply to pick on him, when we had, in fact, done so because his was easiest to dismantle.

He flung himself into my bunk speechless with rage.

When we succeeded in getting the fire to stay alight for

an hour, we dried out things somewhat and made coffee with the brackish liquid in the keg. Then I went out on deck and stood in the cockpit to watch for a shift of wind. It was now northwest, cold and clear and driving us ever farther from the coast. At daylight the run of the sea was sharp and definite and I stood atop the engine room trying to see the land. But nothing was visible save the miles of tumbling water, and alone on deck I behaved like a fool. I cowered away from the blast and cursed myself for going to sea in the *Dolphin*, and just when I had reached the abject depths of this kind of thing there was an overwhelming surge of sheer delight in being alive, still atop the deadly waters, even though it was in a battered wreck, and I commenced to sing as loud as I could bellow.

Nielsen came on deck while I was indulging in these solitary histrionics, and he was in an ugly mood. He leaped to the compass.

"The wind's shifted!" he snapped.

"It hasn't," I replied. "It seems to for moments, but it always comes back to nor'west."

"The hell it does! I got eyes. That wind is going around to north. And here we is, lying to, when we could be on our way back to the land."

"Land? What land? England?"

"All right," he snarled. "If you're so damned smart, stay here till she sinks. I can lay here as long as you can."

And up welled all the anger and resentment between us during the past six months in a wicked and vitriolic flood.

"Sure you can lay here," I retorted bitterly. "You're the champion layer of the world! You've lain on your backside

from Hebron to here. You've let Robbie and me get her under way without help at every single anchorage the length of the Labrador."

"Nobody called me!" he shouted and turned back into the cabin.

I thought about our words for a while and decided to give Nielsen a thrashing. None of us can have been too normal at that point and certainly this project was no normal one. Robbie came out of the cabin as I went into it. Niels had a hatchet in his hand, with which he feigned to be cutting kindling for the stove. So I crouched down on a berth waiting for him to drop the hatchet and slowly he chopped, knowing full well what was on my mind. We said nothing but crouched, tense. Niels was a little stronger than I, for I had not my growth, but I was quicker. And we were both angry enough to do the greatest possible wickedness there on that wreck, rolling and wallowing in the northwest sea of the Atlantic in late October.

"For God's sake, have sense!" Robbie shouted down to us and he was worried, but we answered not a word.

Niels split the kindling into the finest, thinnest sticks. Slowly he chopped and not for more than a flicker did he take his eyes from me.

And then Robbie's voice sounded again.

"Stop it! Stop it!" he bawled. "Here's a ship!"





## SOUTHEAST OF SCATARI

NIELS smiled sardonically and I paid no attention; we both thought Robbie trying to avoid an ugly row. But he shouted again and there was conviction and truth in his call. A ship.

We rushed out on deck.

"Over here!" Robbie cried. "You'll see her when we come to the top of a sea. She's a steamer. Just a little more on the starboard quarter; watch now. Watch—why, damn it, she was right there!"

Niels and I turned back to the cabin, convinced that Robbie had simply made a diversion to prevent quarreling. If so, it had been successful: all the rancor had left us and we felt vile.

"There she is again!" Robbie shouted. "I told you I saw it!"

And looking once more, we too could see the vessel, but she was not a steamer; she was a big banking schooner, hard on the wind under staysail, foresail, and storm trysail. Apparently she would pass about three miles to leeward of us.

Whatever ailed Niels and me was forgotten at once and the three of us stood clutching the mast and looking into each other's face, conferring on an unspoken proposal. It took little time to make up our minds. I nodded.

"Yes," I said. "We'll abandon her; she's a wreck."

From a blanket we made a distress signal and set it on the mainmast. The sea anchor we cut adrift and then, turning, we ran before wind and sea in the direction of the big fishing schooner. Every time we came to the crest of a sea we saw her, long, black, and magnificent, lunging at the opposing masses of water, spray spangles bursting brightly across her foredeck and her masts reeling solemnly. Then we would descend into the hollows and around us there would be nothing save the sea.

We were not going to intercept her but we were going to pass fairly close; that was plain. And after a while we began to think that she would not see us and minus the sea anchor, our last-ditch expedient, we would be in worse case than ever. The steamer had not seen us, so far as we knew, even with a signal. And, just when it seemed certain that she was going to thrash past without having sighted us, we saw men run forward and down came the staysail, by the run; the schooner luffed up and lay there rising and falling in the seas like some superb bird and waiting for us to run down on her.

As we neared we could see a score or more of men aft and they waved and showed us a barrel. Certain we had seen it, they threw it overboard and then we saw that it was a buoy to which there was made fast a long line. We were to pick it up, secure it to our bitts, and then be pulled up to the schooner and taken aboard.

Niels stood by with a boat hook, that implement having somehow survived all of our catastrophes, and we swept down on the line. But the bight sank in the bitter water and Niels missed it. At once we lay to, under the reefed foresail. As we plunged past, the big schooner's stern lifted high above us and we read her name:

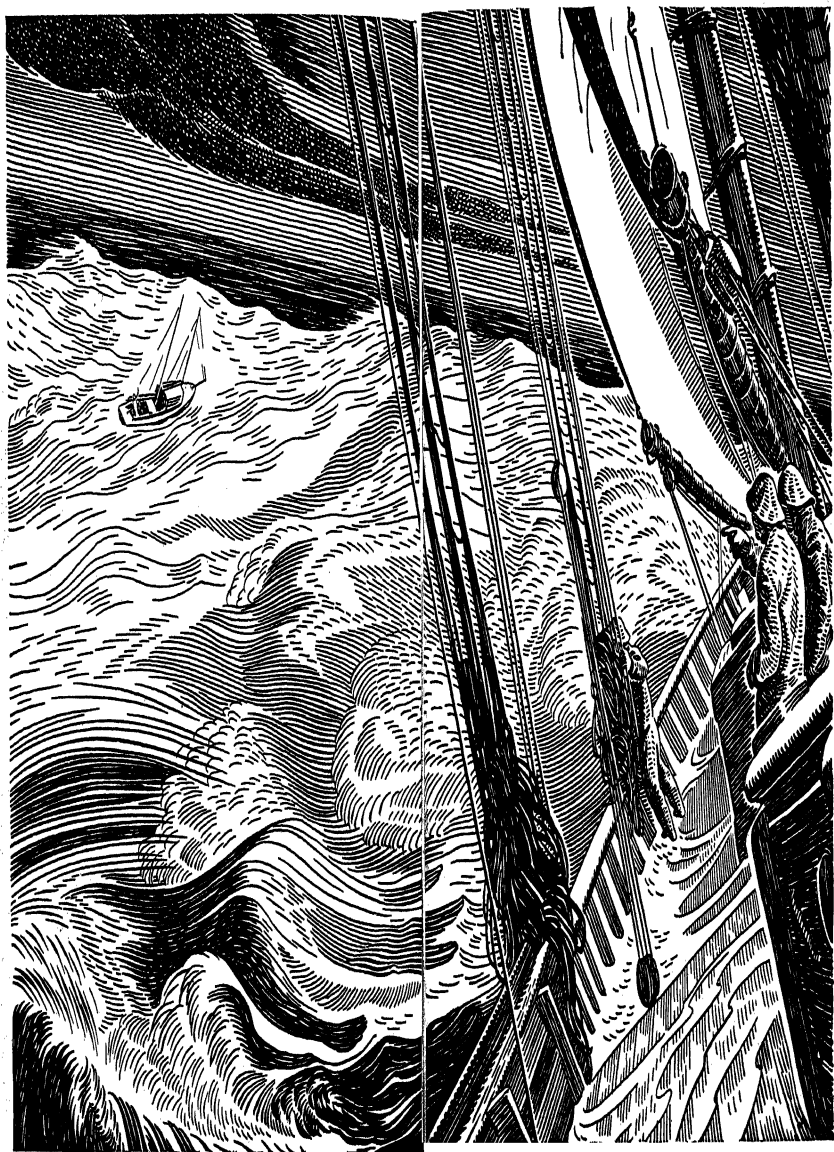
*Mona Marie*

LE HAVE, N.S.

"I'm sending a dory!" roared a short, broad man at the taffrail; her master, we guessed.

We were drifting rapidly away from her, but the *Mona Marie's* people launched a big fishing dory with two men in it and, towing a line, they drifted down to us. Had a steamer launched a lifeboat in the sea running it would have been miraculous seamanship, but the fishermen swung the dory into the water and managed it with a precision and ease having in them all the beauty of perfect co-ordination. We knew what wonderful sea boats the dories are, but we were not surprised when we saw that they could not control her direction with the oars. She drifted well astern of us and then the schooner's crew pulled her back for another try.

That time she came within thirty feet of us and in the bow there was a great fisherman grinning through a black







stubble of beard, his big dark eyes wide and bright with pleasure in the conflict. The end of the tow line was reached and they could come no closer. The big man waved a yellow-oilskinned arm. "We'll get you!" he roared. "Don't worry!"

Then the dory was hauled back to the schooner and she, settling in a sea, squatted on the small boat and swamped it. The men were dropped in the water but almost at once they were plucked out and the dory lifted aboard.

We could see the *Mona Marie's* crew consulting and presently in came the storm trysail and, under foresail alone, the big ship, graceful and splendid on the tumultuous sea, was circled to leeward of us and there she hove to while the buoyed line was thrown over for us to make a second attempt. Once more, we ran down on it and this time there were no hitches; we got the line, made it fast to the foremast, and dropped the foresail. The crew of the fisherman commenced a lusty heaving and in big swoops we were dragged up to the *Mona Marie*, missing the stern by inches and splintering the bowsprit to nothing as we crashed against the thick, black sides.

"You'll have to jump!" the captain of the *Mona Marie* shouted to us and there was no denying that he was right.

Now, it is a firmly established tradition among non-seafarers that the captain is the last to leave his ship, although a sturdier school (from farther inland, I suspect) demands that he go down with her. This latter seemed to me like stickling and I decided on the freer interpretation; I would be last to leave the *Dolphin*. However, the watery gap between the *Dolphin* and the *Mona Marie* was constantly and without rhythm opening and closing; one second there was a twenty-foot abyss and then we would crash together, some-

times at the height of the rail, sometimes several feet below her exposed waterline.

Robbie and Niels waited their chance, clinging to the foremast shrouds, and once Robbie started to jump, only to pull himself back as the *Dolphin* fell away in a split second from the banker. This kind of thing went on for several minutes and it occurred to me that, tradition or no tradition, the shipmaster's function is leading and I had the longest pair of legs. So I joined the pair forward and suddenly got an opportunity to leap when the *Dolphin* drew close to the rail of the *Mona Marie* and, by some whim of the sea, hovered there for a moment.

I jumped and, landing on the big ship's rail, was seized by half a dozen fishermen and flung unceremoniously into the scuppers. I sat up and, before I could dodge, they threw Robbie on top of me. Quickly we unscrambled ourselves and, because the fishermen were shouting incoherently, we rushed to the rail and were horrified to find the *Dolphin's* deck empty, and Nielsen nowhere in sight. However, before we could think he had been lost in trying the leap between the vessels, his head popped out of the cabin and he crawled out on the slippery deck. In his hand he held his suitcase.

Solemnly he waited and when the schooners drew together he threw his suitcase to our exasperated rescuers. Then he followed it.

And thus was destroyed whatever dignity might have been possessed by our abandonment of the schooner *Dolphin*. It was so like Nielsen, so utterly characteristic, to introduce into the situation some bit of ludicrous anticlimax, some piece of jarring practicality which would reduce drama to embar-

rassing commonplace; we apologized to the captain and crew of the *Mona Marie* for the trouble we had caused and I felt like telling them we had just dropped in for a chat.

But the *Dolphin* lay alongside, her broken bowsprit dragging in the water with the tatters of the jib, her mainmast bare, and her planking cracked by violent contact with the *Mona Marie*. She had a considerable list, for, with no one bailing and pumping, she was commencing to fill.

The captain looked at her speculatively.

"We might tow her," he said, doubtfully, "but I'm afraid she'll sink."

"She'll sink, all right," I told him, and I was not at all doubtful.

He nodded. "We'll just let her go, then. There's enough ballast in her to sink her, isn't there? Wouldn't do to let her stay adrift . . . menace to navigation, you know."

I said she would be sure to sink and he ordered her cast off. The sea immediately swept her away and then we could see she would not last much longer. She looked quite pathetic and homemade and I felt very badly despite being glad I was no longer aboard her. The *Mona Marie's* staysail was set and, filling away, she gathered speed; the *Dolphin* was lost in the hollows of the rolling seas to which she was sacrificed. After five minutes we could no longer see even the masts.

I do not think she remained afloat an hour.

The *Mona Marie* was big and she moved in long, sweeping rolls and plunges so different from the *Dolphin's* frantic gyrations that we could hardly keep our feet. Her master was Lemuel Ritcey, of Le Have, Nova Scotia, and he was one of

the five hard cases who were doing the late fall and early winter fishing. It had not paid, for the schooner had been battered by the gales even as was our small one and she had had little time to fish. The day the dreadful northeaster had overtaken us the *Mona Marie* had been anchored on the Grand Bank and so swiftly had it struck that there had been no time to get the anchor up; the heavy manila cable had been cut and after that her history had been like our own. The night before, when we nearly foundered, the *Mona Marie* had been hove to not far off and when we saw her she had been under way but an hour.

Captain Ritcey took us forward and there with the older and more important fishermen who ate at the "first table" we were introduced to vast rashers of eggs and bacon, immense plates of porridge, and entirely unbelievable mugs of coffee. At the head of the table sat the master of the ship; along both sides of the long table sat his men; the *Mona Marie*, like all Nova Scotian bankers, was a first-rate example of maritime democracy. It worked because these men were no sweepings of the waterfronts of world-ports, but stout, independent men who had land, homes, and families. What little excitement we had caused died by the end of breakfast; conversations interrupted by us were resumed and, no longer centers of interest, we listened to the blows of the sea against the long bows, listened to the creaking of the great timbers as they were forced against the storm by half an acre of canvas, and luxuriated in the power and safety of her.

But not the crew of the *Mona Marie*; they said she was too small for the winter fishing, complained of the groaning and pounding up forward, and told how, when we had been

forced by the storm to run, they too had been put to the same maneuver and had gone flying under bare poles for ninety miles before heaving to.

We smiled and said that, so far as we were concerned, we were just as good as on dry land. They looked grave and uncomfortable at this; one of them said we must not take too much for granted.

Aft in the big cabin, hearty bearded fishermen sat around the chart table playing pinochle. The game ran by the hour, day and night almost, and we heard that gales gave them their only rest and recreation; in good weather all hands were in the dories. There were twenty-five or thirty men aboard and only two were required to handle her in bad weather once the canvas had been snugged down.

They gave us bunks and we slept like dead men for eight hours. After dinner I sat a little apart on a sea chest, considering our voyage to Labrador. I regretted the way it had ended and blamed myself for a great many things which had happened and had not been pleasant. I felt sorry and ashamed for my stupid wrangling with Nielsen. And I felt very embarrassed at having lost my ship. While these melancholy thoughts were in my mind, Captain Ritcey, broad and quiet of manner, came over and engaged me in conversation. He asked of the Labrador, he talked of the fishery, he discussed my future plans; soon I got quite interested and forgot all about losing the *Dolphin*. I tried, very awkwardly, to thank him for having picked us off the wreck. He brushed my words gently aside as he stood up, his legs planted wide apart against the long roll.

"It was just a chance to help," he said absently. "Just a

chance to help. That's what I think we're in the world for: to help each other instead of trampling on each other." He scratched one ear and stood silent for a moment. "Yes," he repeated at last, "that's what I believe; we're put in the world to help each other." He turned away and retired to his own cabin.

• All night long the *Mona Marie* slammed into the diminishing gale and in the morning we were near Scatari Light. The air was cold and sunny and the wind so moderated that we were able to carry the four lowers. By noon we were beating into an anchorage at Louisbourg Harbor. I should have been looking at the ancient fortifications that made the town, in French times, the most impregnable seaport in the New World, but I had seen something else. A small green schooner, between forty and forty-five feet in length, was anchored near one of the wharves. Her ends were very like the *Dolphin's* and I had always admired those. She seemed to have, proportionately, a little more beam and I felt sure she drew proportionately more water and had more dead rise.

I nudged Robbie.

"There," I said. "Look at that. If we'd been in her, we'd have had no trouble. She'd take you through anything. If I could lay my hands on a little money, I'd go to see her owner and——"

"Oh, by Jesus Christ!" Robbie snorted and he strode away from me as if I had been infected with bubonic plague.

We made a deposition before the American consular agent and Captain Ritcey filed his. It was, as I remember, the first day of November and the storms had done an enormous

amount of damage. Roofs had been ripped off houses and barns, trees had been uprooted, and the loss of the *Dolphin* had been a very minor part of the list of marine casualties. Schooners were missing, others had been driven ashore (among these the big fellow we had seen standing into St. George Bay the night before the weather started), even steamers had been in trouble. The newspapers were filled with it. The most exciting item concerned ourselves: A Norwegian freighter coming to Sydney, N.S., from Newfoundland had been overtaken by the gale and forced to heave to. Toward nightfall a little fishing schooner had been sighted running before the storm under bare poles. She had lighted a flare and swept past the Norwegian's bow, her decks and crew of three lighted up by the distress signal. Then a great sea rolled up astern and in a twinkling she had been swallowed before the eyes of the freighter's master and watch officers. They protested that they had been unable to help for, hove to though they were, their ship was being swept by the seas, her lifeboats had been crushed, and she was just living out the storm herself.

We recognized the incident, of course, and realized how the disappearance of our flare must have looked to the men on the freighter. But it was a great satisfaction to hear that she could not have helped us. The *Dolphin* had gone, but she had gone in company with far better vessels; larger, abler, and commanded by master mariners who knew much more than I did.

The very next day a howling southeaster struck and the *Mona Marie* just managed to keep her position with both anchors down. It settled for us all question as to the wisdom



of our abandoning the *Dolphin*; had we been aboard her now, disabled as she was, it would have been our finish.

The rest is detail. In Halifax we parted. Nielsen went back to Denmark, Robbie and I went to the States and, after a while, we lost track of each other. But ten years after the *Mona Marie* picked us off a shattered and helpless *Dolphin*, I was in Demerara and, passing one of the stellings, I noticed a mainmast truck above a galvanized roof. There was no mistaking it for a native craft. The logic and seaman-like appropriateness of every fitting told that here was a vessel rigged by men who contended with the sullen gray seas of the north. I was, as usual, quite unable to resist the desire to see beauty in wood and canvas and I plunged into the warm, dim warehouse; it smelled of rum, sugar, and black men. On the river side I found her, and she was unmistakably a Nova Scotia-man. And familiar, too. I walked down the dock and stared at the name on her counter:

*Mona Marie*

LE HAVE, N.S.

I swallowed a couple of times, for I remembered the day when I had first seen that name. About her deck sprawled a mongrel Caribbean crew: Negroes, mulattoes, Indian crosses, and men of so varied an ancestry that no diagnosis could be made. She was not kept. Like the warehouse, she smelled of rum and sugar and blacks. I stayed looking at her until my regard began to attract the attention of the motley scalawags who trod that deck once trod by bluenose sailors.

Going out of the warehouse, I asked a lordly yellow clerk what the *Mona Marie* now did for a living and he replied,

briefly, that she hauled rum, sugar, and passengers around the islands of the Caribbean.

It made me feel discouraged. The *Dolphin's* fate, by comparison, had been a very decent one.



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